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The Commission of Fine Arts

A Brief History
1910-1990



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**THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
A BRIEF HISTORY
1910-1990**

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THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
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The Commission of Fine Arts
Established by Congress
17 May 1910

J. Carter Brown, Chairman
Neil H. Porterfield, Vice-Chairman

Joan Abrahamson
Adele Chatfield-Taylor

George E. Hartman
Robert A. Peck

Charles H. Atherton
Secretary
Donald B. Myer
Assistant Secretary

Foreword

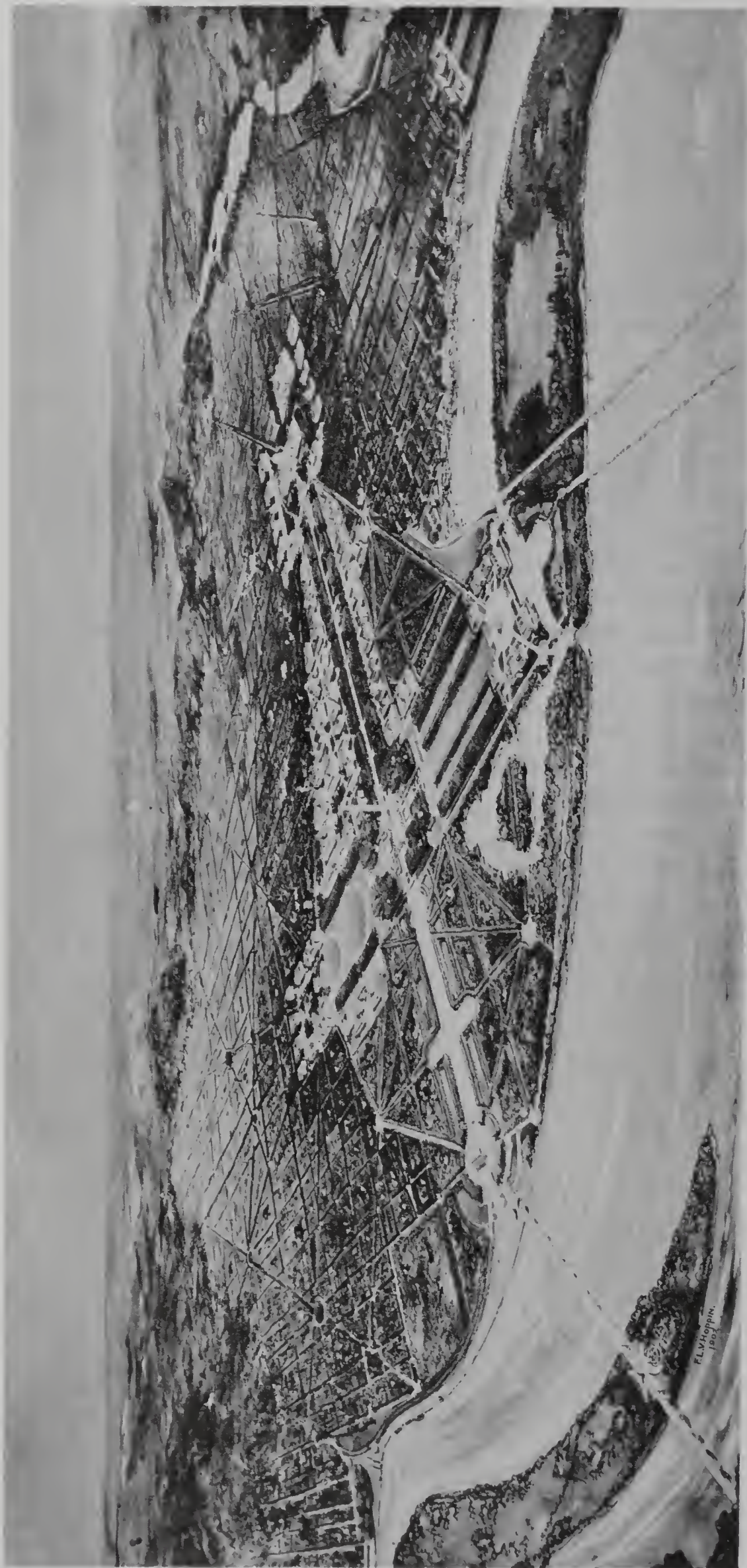
The growth of any city is a complex enough matter; the evolution of a small provincial town such as Washington was into the great capital it has become is all the more complicated. To understand it, one has to go to the sources that afford the clearest picture of how the city has developed. This history is an attempt to provide one such view.

Since 1910, the Commission of Fine Arts has had the unique opportunity to guide the planning and the architectural growth of the Federal City. Most of what we see in the heart of the Capital today is the result of this continuing guidance, a service which has become increasingly necessary to the preservation of those qualities that distinguish Washington from the other great American cities.

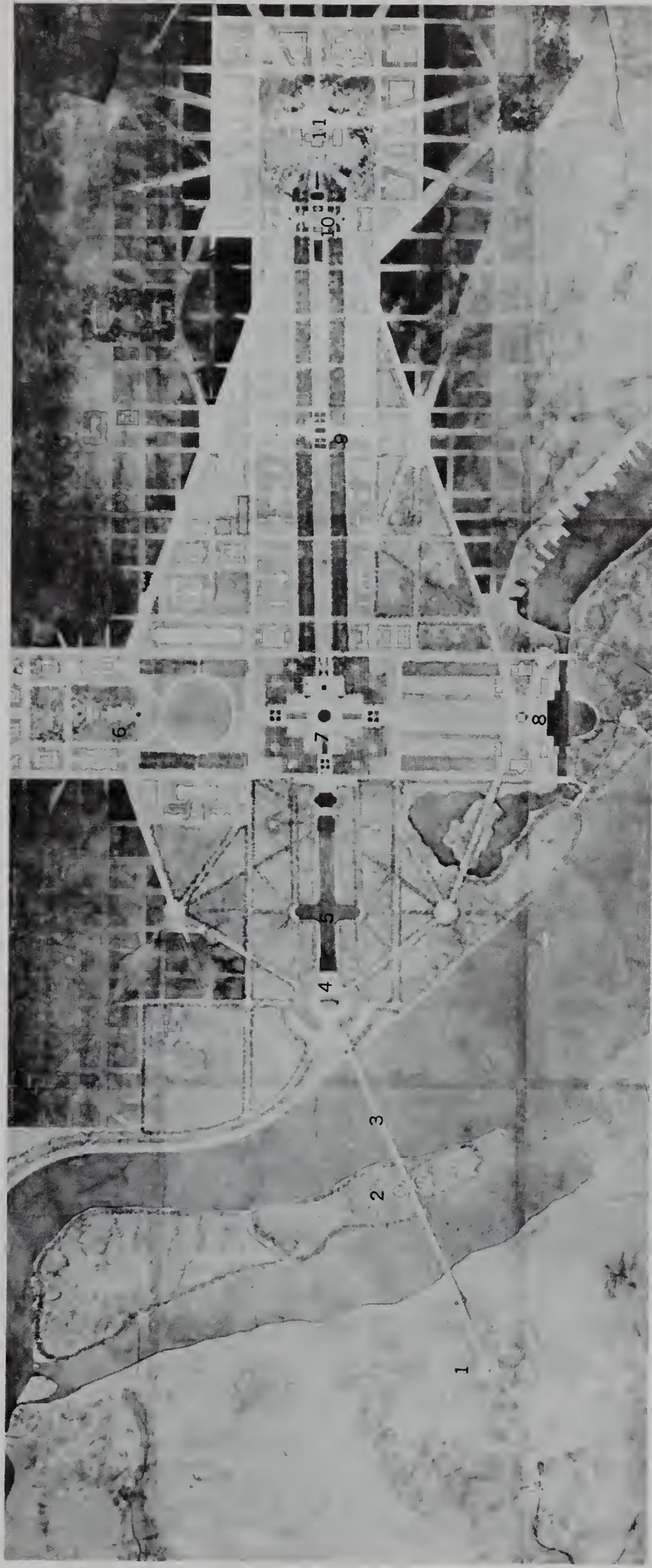
Charles H. Atherton,
Secretary

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Perspective rendering showing the McMillan Commission proposals.



McMillan Commission Plan, 1901. This large rendering hangs in the offices of the Commission of Fine Arts.

Photograph by Henry Beville, National Gallery of Art.

Key:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Arlington Cemetery | 4. The Lincoln Memorial | 7. The Washington Monument Gardens | 9. Cross Axis of the Mall |
| 2. Columbia Island | 5. The Reflecting Pool | 8. Memorial Site, now the location
of the Jefferson Memorial | 10. Union Square |
| 3. Arlington Memorial Bridge | 6. The White House | | 11. The Capitol |



Daniel Burnham (1846–1912), first chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts. This portrait by Anders Zorn hangs in the Commission's offices.

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

A Brief History

1910–1976

The Commission of Fine Arts was established in 1910 to meet the growing need for a permanent body to advise the government on matters pertaining to the arts; and particularly, to guide the architectural development of Washington so that the capital city would reflect, in stateliness and grandeur, the emergence of the United States as a world power.

The initial legislation authorized the Commission to advise on statues, fountains and monuments in the District of Columbia and to advise generally on matters of art when requested to do so by the President or a member of Congress. Subsequently, Executive Orders and Acts of Congress greatly enlarged the scope of the Commission's duties.¹

Prior to the establishment of the Commission of Fine Arts, it was the practice of Congress, when legislation was enacted providing for a monument or other work of art, to authorize the appointment of a committee to advise concerning the specific project under consideration. Such a committee was as a rule composed of laymen not particularly qualified to give advice on matters of art. Money was then appropriated to meet the expenses of the committee and the Jury of Award. When the project was completed the committee disbanded, leaving Congress without a recognized body to whom matters pertaining to the fine arts could be referred and requiring the appointment of another committee when some new work of art was desired.

The 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and the "City Beautiful" movement which followed were the incentives for the formation of a Public Art League in Washington. The organizers of this group were members of the American Institute of Architects and the Cosmos Club. The object of the League was to secure legislation which would establish a body of experts to decide upon the merits of works of art and architecture to be commissioned or acquired by the Government. The group was to be composed of the presidents of the American Institute of Architects, the National Academy of Design and the National Sculpture Society, in addition to two members appointed by the President. The bill presented in 1897 never became law; Congress wanted a commission which was advisory only and whose members were all appointed, by either itself or the President.

¹ See Appendix for a legislative history of the Commission.

About this time the Senate Park Commission was beginning its work developing plans for parks and the placing of public buildings in the District of Columbia. The Park Commission was appointed in 1901 by the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, of which Senator James McMillan of Michigan was chairman, and is often referred to as the McMillan Commission. It grew out of an interest in the development of Washington sparked by the Capital's Centennial in 1900 and the ideas presented at the convention of the American Institute of Architects held in Washington the same year. Following suggestions from the Institute, two men were asked to serve on the Park Commission: Daniel H. Burnham of Chicago, architect and business leader; and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. of Brookline, Massachusetts, landscape architect. They accepted, and in turn asked architect Charles F. McKim of New York to join them. The three then chose Augustus St. Gaudens of New York, sculptor, as the fourth member.

These men, who were recognized leaders in their professions, made a study of the Washington area and then, in order to gain a better understanding of park design and the relation of public buildings to parks, made a brief trip to Rome, Venice, Vienna, Budapest, Paris and London under the direction of Olmsted, the landscape architect member. In these cities they could study actual examples of the type of design they envisioned for Washington and better understand the problems of scale and material which they would encounter when making their plans. While Burnham was in London he met with Alexander J. Cassatt, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, who subsequently agreed to the removal of the railroad tracks from the Mall, an essential step in implementing the Commission's recommendations.

The Park Commission of 1901, before going out of existence, made a report to Congress in which it recommended adherence to the principles of the L'Enfant Plan of 1791. It also recommended an extensive, coordinated park system for the District of Columbia. Particular attention was paid to the Mall and to the placing of a memorial to Abraham Lincoln on the site where it now stands. Taken together, the suggestions made in this report were from that time on referred to as the Plan of 1901 for Washington.

On 11 January 1909 a committee of the American Institute of Architects appealed to President Roosevelt for the establishment of a Bureau of Fine Arts to advise on plans for all future public buildings, bridges, parks, sculpture, painting and other work in which design plays an integral part. As an initial step, the committee, of which Cass Gilbert was chairman and Glenn Brown secretary, suggested that the President designate a Council of Fine Arts which could exercise advisory functions when called upon and could also make recommendations on its own initiative. President Roosevelt replied the same day in a communication addressed to the committee, approving the recom-

mendation and requesting the names of thirty men representing all parts of the country who would make up the Council. The President stated further that he would direct his cabinet officers to ask the Council for advice on all matters pertaining to architecture, selection of sites, landscaping, sculpture, and painting. The names of thirty artists were submitted, and on 18 January 1909 Roosevelt nominated them to the Council of Fine Arts, which he established by Executive Order on that day. The Council held one meeting at which the location of the Lincoln Memorial was considered and the site selected by the McMillan Commission approved.

In March 1909 Taft became President, and while he was much in favor of an arts commission, he believed that it should be established by Act of Congress, not by Executive Order. Therefore, he abolished the Council of Fine Arts but supported congressional legislation to create a similar commission. A bill was introduced into the Senate by Senator Elihu Root of New York; in a letter addressed to the chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts in May 1935 on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its establishment, Mr. Root told of its early legislative history:

Sometime about the early spring of 1910 some Senator had introduced in the Senate a resolution providing for the purchase by the Government of a number of paintings that nobody wanted to buy and under the rule that Resolution was referred to the Committee on the Library. The responsibility for protecting the Government against a waste of money was thus thrown upon the Committee.

A little discussion developed the fact that all the members of the committee had an uncomfortable feeling that the pictures were probably worthless and no such purchase ought to be made, but that no member of the committee felt any such confidence in his own knowledge and judgment about such things as to feel like making a report to the Senate based on his opinion and maintaining that opinion on the floor. We all felt that the committee ought to have some way of getting an expert opinion to guide it in making its report.

In the discussion we recalled Theodore Roosevelt's appointment of a Fine Arts Council, which fell to the ground because it had no legal standing, and we recalled also the advantage received from the report of park development of the informal commission selected by the McMillan Commission, and we finally determined to ask Congress to provide for the appointment of a fine arts commission which would meet the need that our committee was then experiencing and a similar need which was liable to occur in a multitude of cases under which government officers had to pass on questions of art without being really competent to perform such a duty. . . .

I drafted a very brief statute . . . and a little informal explanation of the need which the committee felt for expert assistance in the performing of its duties carried the bill through.

And so, without creation of any power of legal compulsion, there was brought to the service of the Government the authority of competent opinion upon questions of art arising in the course of administration, and widespread and habitual deference to such an opinion has saved the Government and the community from God knows how many atrocities.

In the House of Representatives the bill was sponsored by Representative Samuel W. McCall of Massachusetts. The legislation was approved on 17 May 1910 and provided for a Commission of seven members, well qualified in the field of fine arts, to be appointed by the President for a term of four years. The Commission was "... to advise upon the location of statues, fountains and monuments in the public squares, streets and parks in the District of Columbia... and upon the selection of artists for the execution of the same..." The Commission was also asked to "... advise generally upon questions of art when required to do so by the President, or by any committee of either House of Congress..."



Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., 1870–1957. Member of the Commission of Fine Arts, 1910–1918.

Later in 1910 President Taft widened the scope of the Commission's duties by issuing an Executive Order which gave the Commission authority to advise on plans for public buildings erected by the Government in the District of Columbia.

Appointed as chairman of the original Commission was Daniel H. Burnham of Chicago. Burnham was an architect and business leader, a partner in the Chicago architectural firm of Burnham and Root, and Chief of Construction at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. As mentioned before, he was a member of the Senate Park Commission. He was also the architect of the new Union Station in Washington.

Another member of the Senate Park Commission who was appointed to the original Commission of Fine Arts was Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. He was a landscape architect from Brookline, Massachusetts, and the son of Fredrick Law Olmsted, Sr., the designer (with Calvert Vaux) of New York's Central Park, the World's Fair of 1893, and the United States Capitol grounds, among many other projects. When Olmsted, Sr. died in 1903, his son and stepson carried on his work.

The other five members of the Commission were Thomas Hastings of New York, architect and partner in the firm of Carrère and Hastings, architects of the New York Public Library; Daniel Chester French of New York, sculptor, who was later to do the Lincoln statue in the Lincoln Memorial; Francis D. Millet of New York, painter, Director of Decoration at the World's Fair of 1893 and Secretary of the Federation of Fine Arts; Cass Gilbert of New York, architect, president of the American Institute of Architects and later architect of the United States Supreme Court building; and Charles Moore of Michigan. Moore had been secretary to Senator James McMillan of Michigan, was closely associated with the formation of the Senate Park Commission, and as its secretary, accompanied the members on their trip to Europe.

The Commission of Fine Arts became custodian of the plans of the Park Commission of 1901. The plans had been stored for several years in the basement of the Library of Congress, and careless handling and lack of proper storage facilities had resulted in damage to many of them. The Commission had the plans restored as completely as possible and were thus able to comply with requests for their exhibition in other cities. They were loaned in May 1911 to the municipal authorities of Philadelphia for exhibition at the first municipal planning exhibition in America. Glenn Brown, the Washington architect who had been one of the first to urge the creation of a Commission of Fine Arts, was asked to supervise the installation of the plans at this and any future exhibitions.

The Commission's first offices were in the Lemon Building, 1729 New York Avenue, since demolished and now the site of the American Institute of Architects headquarters building. Meetings were held



Members of the Commission of Fine Arts inspecting a model of a street light in front of the Lemon Building, where the Commission had its offices from 1910–1923. The woman with them is probably Kathryn Harris, the designer of the lamppost.

monthly, as they are now, usually in Washington but occasionally in other cities. The Commission offices remained in the Lemon Building until 1923, when they were moved to the Interior Department building at Eighteenth and F Streets, N.W. (now the General Services Administration building). Late in 1933 the Commission moved to the Navy Department building on Constitution Avenue, and in May 1937 to the new Interior Department building at Eighteenth and C Street, N.W., where it remained until 1970. In August of that year the Commission moved to 708 Jackson Place, N.W., one of the remodeled nineteenth century townhouses on the west side of Lafayette Square, across from the White House. At present the Commission of Fine Arts has a staff of seven. In addition to the Secretary and Assistant Secretary, both registered architects, it includes a third architect, two architectural historians, and two administrative aides.

The projects reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts since its formation in 1910 run into the tens of thousands. In 1911 there were forty-one submissions; at present the number runs between four and five hundred per year. Out of these many thousands of submissions only a few have been selected for discussion here. These projects have been chosen because they underwent marked changes in design or a change in site as a result of Commission recommendations, or because they illustrate the Commission's thinking in regard to a specific problem or building type. The illustrations have been chosen, as much as possible, from the architectural renderings and models seen by the Commission when the projects were reviewed.

The Lincoln Memorial

One of the major monuments in the city of Washington and one of the first projects to come before the Commission of Fine Arts was the Lincoln Memorial. While this building is so beautifully sited and universally admired for its perfect proportions, reference to the minutes of the meetings of the Commission of Fine Arts discloses that many months of deliberation were necessary to bring about the final result, particularly in regard to a site, the type of memorial and the proper landscape setting. The design of the building itself generated very little discussion; the Commission was enthusiastic about it from the beginning.

Congress provided for a Lincoln Memorial Commission in February 1911. At its first meeting this Commission asked the Commission of Fine Arts "to make suggestions as to the location, plans and designs



Rendering showing Charles F. McKim's proposal for the Lincoln Memorial, 1901.

for a monument or memorial to Lincoln in the City of Washington, to make suggestions in connection with each location considered as to a memorial suited to it and within the limit of cost authorized by the Act, and to advise as to the best method of selecting the artists, sculptors and architects to make the proper designs and to execute them.”²

The Commission of Fine Arts was occupied for the next year with the problem of selecting the type of monument and, especially, with determining the site. Actually, both type and site had already been recommended in the Plan of 1901. A drawing done for the McMillan Commission showed a building similar in design to the one finally erected, and the site suggested was the one in Potomac Park where the memorial now stands. It was a long time, however, before all concerned came back to the original recommendations.

There were many who did not like the Potomac Park site. The chief objection was that it was so remote and malarial (it was reclaimed land) that a memorial built there “would shake itself down with loneliness and ague.”³ Several other sites were suggested: Arlington Cemetery, a site near the new Union Station, the grounds of the Soldiers' Home, and Meridian Hill on Sixteenth Street. John Russell Pope, the noted New York architect, was asked by the Lincoln Memorial Commission to prepare designs for both the Meridian Hill and Soldiers' Home sites, as well as the Potomac Park location. At the request of several members of Congress, Daniel Burnham's office prepared drawings for the Union Station site. There was strong support from real

² *Minutes of the Commission of Fine Arts*, (hereafter, *Minutes*) 17 March 1911, p. 5.

³ *Ninth Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1921, p. 20.



John Russell Pope's design for the Lincoln Memorial.

estate and automobile interests for the memorial to take the form of a highway to Gettysburg. As late as January 1912 the Lincoln Memorial Commission asked the Commission of Fine Arts to consider still another suggestion: the erection of an obelisk, similar to the Washington Monument, as a memorial to Lincoln. The Commission, in its reply, expressed the feeling that this form was too closely associated with the memory of Washington. In reply to a specific suggestion to place an obelisk north of the White House on the Washington Monument-White House axis, the Commission said:

To repeat the Washington Monument in a symmetrical position on the opposite side of the White House axis would degrade both great shafts from the function of individual memorials to the position of a pair of colossal ornaments in a badly-conceived architectural scheme.

The argument in favor of twin obelisks might in the future be advanced to permit the erection of a row of such memorials, and as time went on we might have a Cyclopean stockade of obelisks bristling from the Capitol to the Potomac.⁴

The letter was signed by Francis D. Millet, vice-chairman of the Commission, who lost his life in the Titanic disaster three month later.⁵

In the meantime the Commission had decided unanimously that it would recommend the Potomac Park site. In a report made to the Lincoln Memorial Commission in July 1911, the Commission of Fine Arts stated its reasons:

⁴ *Minutes*, 25 January 1912, Exhibit A.

⁵ Two months after Millet's death the Commission lost its first chairman, Daniel H. Burnham, who died in Germany in June 1912. He was succeeded by Daniel Chester French, who served as chairman until 1915.

The comparative isolation of the Potomac Park site in the midst of a large area of undeveloped vacant land constitutes a peculiar advantage. For a long distance in every direction the surroundings are absolutely free for such treatment as would best enhance the effect of the memorial. The fact that there are now no features of interest or importance, that everything is yet to be done, means that no embarrassing obstacles would interfere with the development of a setting adequate in extent and perfect in design, without compromise and without discord.

Congress has here created a great park area, raised well above the highest river floods, and this area now awaits development. By the ordinary operations of park improvement it is a simple matter to raise in this area an eminence suited to the site of a great memorial, and to adorn and surround it by such landscape features as shall give it effective and beautiful support. In judging the site of a memorial to endure throughout the ages we must regard not what the location was, nor what it is to-day, but what it can be made for all time to come. The short period required for grading and the growth of trees would be as nothing compared with the possibility which this site presents of treating freely every element of the surroundings in the best manner that the skill of man can devise.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of giving to a monument of the size and significance of the Lincoln Memorial complete and undisputed domination over a large area, together with a certain dignified isolation from competing structures, or even from minor features unrelated to it. Upon no other possible site in the city of Washington can this end be secured so completely as upon the Potomac Park site.

A memorial upon this location would have the further advantage that it need not be so high as to bring it into competition with the Washington Monument in order to make it visible from great distances, without danger of obstruction by buildings erected on private property. A monumental structure standing in a broad plain surrounded by an amphitheater of hills is as widely seen and is as impressive as one upon a hilltop. From the hills of the District and of Virginia the constantly recurring views of a great Lincoln Memorial, seen in association with the Washington Monument and the Dome of the Capitol, would be impressive in the highest degree.

While this site is sufficiently isolated to give it dignity, it is readily accessible, being situated in a park which even in its partially developed state has become a place of great popular resort, and which is destined to be the chief center of outdoor reunion in Washington, for people on foot as well as those in vehicles.

As a matter of general design in relation to the plan of the city as a whole, any site upon the main east and west axis, in line with the Capitol and the Washington Monument, has an importance which no other site can claim; and the termination of that axis at the Potomac River gains a signifi-



Daniel Chester French and Henry Bacon in front of the Lincoln statue.

cance comparable only with that of the site selected in the plan of 1791 for the monument to Washington. The Lincoln Memorial would have its dignity enhanced by being so placed; and the termination of the axis by an object worthy to rank with the Washington Monument and the Capitol would be of the utmost value to the great composition.⁶

At a meeting with the Lincoln Memorial Commission in the same month (July 1911) the Commission of Fine Arts was asked to recommend a designer to advise the Memorial Commission and prepare designs for a memorial on the Potomac Park site, so that the Memorial Commission could decide whether it would finally approve that site. The names of William Mitchell Kendall and Henry Bacon, both of New York, were suggested. On the first formal ballot, Bacon was approved unanimously.

When the Commission of Fine Arts inspected models and drawings made by Bacon in December 1911, they were convinced that the Potomac Park site was the proper one. Designs by John Russell Pope for this site were considered early the following year, but in June 1912 the Commission inspected a revised design by Bacon and gave it full approval.

The Commission worked closely with the architect on the selection of materials: the type of marble for the memorial and the kind of granite for the terrace wall and steps. It approved the selection of Daniel Chester French as sculptor of the Lincoln statue and of Jules Guerin, painter, as designer of the murals inside the memorial.⁷ From time to time, the Commission inspected the sculpture and the paintings in the artists' studios.

The architectural and landscape development of the area immediately surrounding the Lincoln Memorial also received the attention of the Commission of Fine Arts. The architect had from the beginning preferred a circular treatment for this area, but some of the Commissioners were not entirely convinced. Over a period of months, alternate proposals were presented by Clarence Howard, the architect for the area between the Memorial and the Washington Monument. Considerable discussion ensued about the merits of the various schemes. Howard's final study showed a rectangular treatment; it was disapproved in favor of Bacon's original circle.

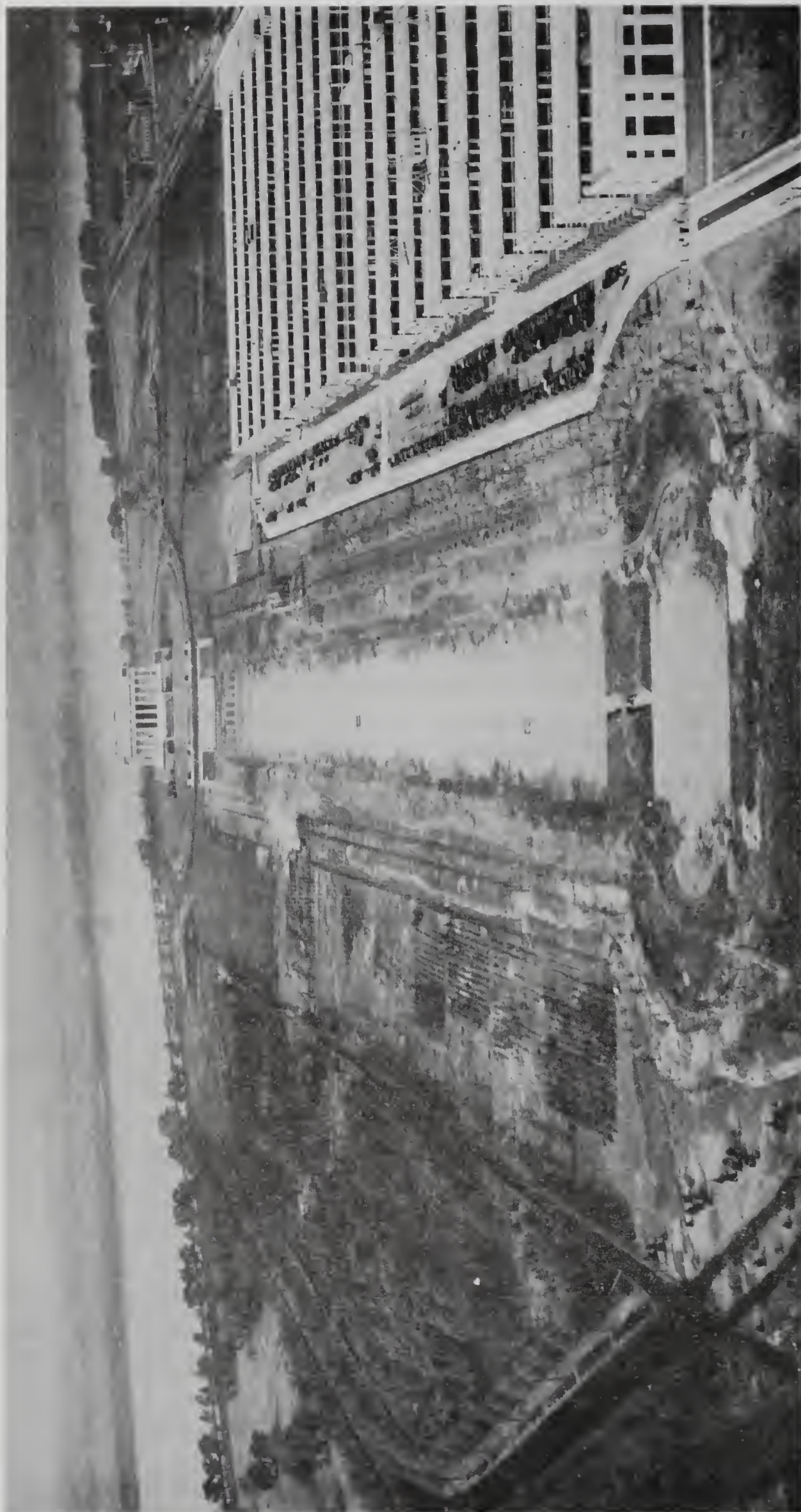
Grading plans and sections for the entire area were reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts during the next few years, and particular attention was paid to the approaches to the Memorial from the west, especially from Rock Creek Parkway, Potomac Park, and from the memorial bridge which was expected to be built in the immediate area.

⁶ *Eighth Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1919, pp. 62-65.

⁷ French, the Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, resigned from the commission in 1915 to devote all his time to the Lincoln statute. He was succeeded as chairman by Charles Moore, who served until 1937.

During the years in which the Commission was studying plans for the Lincoln Memorial, progress was also being made on the Reflecting Pool and its landscaping. Like the Lincoln Memorial, the Reflecting Pool was a major element in the Plan of 1901. Late in 1911 Henry Bacon (then the architect advisor to the Lincoln Memorial Commission) asked the Commission of Fine Arts for information on the tree spacing along the "canal", as the Reflecting Pool was called at that time. Details of the construction of the pool—depth, material, and the design of the coping to border it—were reviewed by the Commission during the next few years. In the summer of 1915 final grading and planting advice was sought from the Commission. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the landscape architect member of the Commission, was appointed to work with the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds on this matter. Because of drainage problems in the area the selection of the kind of tree to be planted along the Reflecting Pool was a critical one. After much study Olmsted recommended the use of the European elm as best suited to the site, both in regard to appearance and ability to survive poor drainage. Two rows of these trees were planted on either side of the basin in 1916. By 1935 the fears of drainage problems had been substantiated, and it was conceded that it was likely that all the trees would be short-lived. Gilmore Clarke, at that time the landscape architect member of the Commission of Fine Arts, suggested a method of draining surplus soil water from the area. This has alleviated the situation as has the natural lowering of the water table in the area, although large numbers of the original trees have had to be replaced.

In March 1919 the Commission's advice was sought on the advisability of removing the two cross arms of the Reflecting Pool which were shown on the McMillan Commission drawings. The exigencies of World War I caused the Government to erect large temporary buildings on the site where the northern arm was to go, which meant that there would be a long delay in completing the pool if the original scheme were adhered to. The Commission requested time to study the problem with Henry Bacon. Early in 1920 the views of the Commissioners and several former members were expressed. Cass Gilbert and Thomas Hastings, both former members, were most strongly in favor of keeping the pool as McKim had designed it, with the arms. Pierce Anderson, also a former member, felt that it was better to remove the cross arms because they would impede the movement of the visitor along the pool toward the Lincoln Memorial. Olmsted favored building the pool with straight sides and filling it. If it appeared then that the cross arms were really necessary, they could be added. James Greenleaf, the landscape architect member of the Commission, agreed with the architect, Henry Bacon, that eliminating the cross arms would add scale to the design. But he added that one argument for retaining them would be that building the arms "right up against the concrete walls



The Lincoln Memorial before construction of Arlington Memorial Bridge, showing the partially completed Reflecting Pool and the "temporary" Government buildings on the right. Photograph by Commercial Photo Company.

of those horrid Government buildings and stopping there makes it too obvious to be disregarded, that the buildings must go.”⁸. He hastened to add that this was not sufficient reason for building the arms but was one reason he regretted their omission. Perhaps if his advice had been followed the temporary buildings would have been removed sooner than they were—in 1970. The decision was finally made to build the pool without the cross arms.

By September 1919 the Memorial was far enough along to consider a planting scheme. James Greenleaf presented his recommendations, which were that the planting should be simple and strong, that the use of irregularly rounded masses was most suitable, and that planting of a strictly formal type accentuating vertical lines should be avoided. He was concerned that limitation of funds might compromise the scheme and stressed the fact that the landscaping required careful study, that it must be right and that there must be adequate funds to secure the large specimens needed; a suggestion was made that some of these might be transplanted from other Washington park areas. Mr. Greenleaf’s fears about the size of the plantings were borne out when the Commission observed one of the English yews being placed. It was recognized immediately that the tree was so small in relation to the large expanse of wall that three such specimens would be needed for the proper effect. The recommendation was made that if funds were strictly limited it would be better to use a few large specimens where most crucial and add other plantings later, rather than make the effect trivial by using smaller, less expensive trees. Study of the planting plan occupied the Commission for the rest of the year.

Lighting around the Memorial was also considered by the Commission in consultation with the architect, who recommended only a row of lampposts around the circle. Although the Memorial was dedicated in 1922, there was no artificial light on the Lincoln statue until 1927. It was placed with the advice of the sculptor, Daniel Chester French, and enthusiastically approved by the Commission of Fine Arts.

A suggestion to light the exterior of the Lincoln Memorial itself was not made until 1962, when Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then a member of the staff of the Secretary of Labor, asked the Commission of Fine Arts for its views on lighting this and the Jefferson Memorial. The members of the Commission agreed that the general increase in lighting in the city had thrown these buildings into darkness, and they thought that illumination could be advantageous if it were respectful of the architecture and kept at a low level. First attempts made in 1969 proved to be much too bright, and after several changes the lighting was approved in 1972.

⁸ *Minutes*, 20 February 1920, Exhibit G.

Arlington Memorial Bridge

An integral part of the Lincoln Memorial composition in the Plan of 1901 was a bridge connecting the Memorial with Arlington Cemetery. In fact, plans for erecting a bridge in this area had been before Congress since 1884. None of the several proposals was ever successful until an event in 1921 brought some action. On Armistice Day in that year the body of the Unknown Soldier was to be interred in Arlington. Thousands of people tried to reach the cemetery via the two bridges from Washington and created a monstrous traffic jam. It took President Harding and his party one and one-half hours to make a trip which usually took twenty minutes. Members of the Commission of Fine Arts were with the President, and at their meeting the next day agreed to ask Congress to make an appropriation immediately so that plans for the bridge could get underway.

Congress complied with the request and, as in the case of the Lincoln Memorial, a commission was appointed to oversee the planning and construction of the bridge. This body worked closely with the Commission of Fine Arts. One of the first questions to arise was that of a proper site. The Plan of 1901 showed the bridge connecting the Lincoln Memorial with Arlington Cemetery and the Lee Mansion. The Bridge Commission, however, had received arguments in favor of a location on the line of New York Avenue extended, farther up the river, close to the site of the present Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. The basic arguments for this location were that it could be a high bridge and would not need a draw, and that it could handle more traffic as there would be no problem of congestion at a circle as there would be with a bridge at the Lincoln Memorial.

The Commission of Fine Arts was much against a bridge at the New York Avenue site. The members felt that if a draw were really needed it could be built in a low bridge at the Lincoln Memorial. As for the traffic problem, they felt, first of all, that this was to be a memorial bridge to Arlington Cemetery, not a traffic bridge; what traffic it carried could easily be accommodated by the large circle around the Memorial.

Henry Bacon, the architect of the Lincoln Memorial, was very much opposed to the New York Avenue proposal because he felt that a bridge there would dwarf the Memorial. Olmsted, at this time the only surviving member of the McMillan Commission, said that this Commission had considered the New York Avenue site and rejected it after having gone over the same arguments. He thought that there was no harm in re-opening the question, but he also felt that the unanimous decision of the McMillan Commission should not be cast aside lightly, especially since the Lincoln Memorial had been designed and built with the idea in mind that the bridge would be built at that point.

In a letter to the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts strongly recommended the Lincoln Memorial site and emphasized the importance of maintaining the "one grand sweep from the Capitol to the Mansion on the heights of Arlington."⁹ In December 1922, after a joint meeting with the Commission of Fine Arts and a conference with President Harding, the Bridge Commission decided on the Lincoln Memorial site.

The Bridge Commission then asked the Commission of Fine Arts for its advice on whether the architect for the bridge should be selected directly or by competition. The Commission of Fine Arts favored direct selection, as had been done with the Lincoln Memorial, and suggested three names to the Bridge Commission: Charles Platt (architect of the Freer Gallery), Paul Cret (architect of the Pan American Union building), and the firm of McKim, Mead and White. The Bridge Commission chose McKim, Mead and White, and in May 1923, William Mitchell Kendall of this office appeared before the Commission of Fine Arts with his preliminary design.¹⁰

In general, the Commission was pleased with the presentation. There was some discussion concerning the width of the bridge, with the Commission members preferring 100 feet to Kendall's 80, and considerable debate on the treatment of the circle where the bridge was to terminate at Columbia Island, adjacent to the Virginia shore. Charles Moore, chairman of the Commission, remarked that the Park Commission had contemplated a circle at this point large enough for a memorial to Robert E. Lee. Space was also needed for landscaping the area as a park and for bringing in three roadways—the proposed Mount Vernon Parkway from the south, the Lee Highway from the north and the road linking the bridge with the entrance to Arlington Cemetery. These problems concerning the treatment of the Virginia terminus of the bridge, already apparent at this first meeting, were to occupy the Commission and the architect for over a decade.

There was also some mention at this meeting of a problem which was to arise in relation to the Washington end of the bridge. Early in the planning stages, a suggestion had been made to take Rock Creek Parkway and East Potomac Park traffic through an arch in the bridge abutment rather than up onto the circle. The Commission of Fine Arts did not like the idea. It was felt that a roadway cutting through under the bridge would destroy the balanced design and dignity of the scheme and obliterate the watergate steps which were to lead from the Potomac up to the plaza directly behind the Memorial. In his preliminary presentation Kendall noted that in designing the roadways

⁹ *Minutes*, 7 September 1922, Exhibit B.

¹⁰ Charles F. McKim of this firm, a member of the Senate Park Commission, died in 1909.

he had omitted the abutment arch and brought the approaches into a great open plaza, with suitable provisions being made for traffic which would by-pass the bridge. This pleased the Commission, which was so much against the idea of an abutment arch that a letter was written later (October 1925) to the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks asking that the alternate plan with the arch be eliminated completely "lest it may crop up later to befog the situation."¹¹

Work went ahead on the bridge itself, and in May 1927 Kendall presented a set of preliminary drawings for the surrounding area: the Lincoln Memorial Plaza and the watergate steps, the sea wall, the "Avenue of Heroes" to Arlington Cemetery, and a sketch plan of the entire project, including both approaches. The Commission of Fine Arts recommended a strong architectural treatment for all the elements on the Lincoln Memorial side as this was the end of a great composition: the Capitol, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and finally, the Memorial Bridge. Then Colonel U. S. Grant III, Executing and Disbursing Officer of the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission, brought up the question of traffic around the Lincoln Memorial Circle. He said this had been raised by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, which had unanimously agreed that it would be desirable to make provision for a road which would pass through an arch in the bridge abutment. They were concerned about the congestion at the Circle during rush hour when traffic coming from the Federal Triangle (then in the planning stages) would meet the bridge, Rock Creek Parkway and Potomac Park traffic. A plan was presented which Kendall said he could not accept as it would not be in keeping with the dignity of the Lincoln Memorial. He regarded the attempt to tamper with the Lincoln Memorial composition as "most unfortunate," compared the enormous size of the Lincoln Memorial Plaza to the Place de la Concorde in Paris, and added, "No one in Paris would think of allowing a tunnel under the Place de la Concorde to accommodate traffic."¹² The majority of the Commission members were reluctant to approve an underpass or a tunnel under the watergate steps, and James Greenleaf said:

We are talking about conditions fifty years from now. By that time a new Highway Bridge (Fourteenth Street) will have been built and other bridges in addition to Key Bridge will be to the north of the Memorial Bridge. We should remember the Memorial Bridge is part of the park system of the District of Columbia, particularly that part between the Key Bridge and Highway Bridge, on both sides of the river, and connecting with the Arlington National Cemetery.¹³

¹¹ *Minutes*, 8 October 1925, Exhibit E.

¹² *Minutes* 27 May 1927, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.



Model showing McKim, Mead & White's proposal for the Arlington Memorial Bridge and the watergate steps.

The decision at this meeting was to ask Kendall if he would try to reach a solution which would accommodate traffic without impairing the beauty of the composition. He agreed to try but doubted that it could be done.

In December 1927 Kendall was back with some suggestions. He still preferred not to have an underpass but submitted a design showing a tunnel under the watergate steps, which would avoid cutting the steps in two with a road as other designs would have done. The Commission of Fine Arts, by now in agreement with the Planning Commission that some kind of underpass for traffic was necessary, approved this plan.

However, in February 1928 the Commission was told by Colonel Grant that the tunnel would be very expensive. He wanted the Commission to consider once again cutting the steps by a road or possibly omitting them altogether. The Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission had by this time hired William Partridge, who had worked with McKim in 1901, to find a solution. It was his feeling that the steps were not part of the original solution, that the idea had never really crystallized. Also, he noted that McKim's idea for the Lincoln Memorial was a sort of "Brandenburg Gate" which was open on both sides, with the Reflecting Pool on one side and the watergate steps on the other. When Bacon designed the Memorial he closed it on the river side and added a statue of Lincoln which looked out onto the Reflecting Pool. Thus the problem became a very different one; the need for the steps as a part of the composition disappeared. As for their practical use as a way



The watergate steps as built, showing the steps broken by the traffic lanes of Rock Creek Parkway.

to enter the city by water, that was doubtful also. Partridge thought that if a watergate was really needed, Hains Point would make a better site.

Kendall could not accept Partridge's plan to eliminate the steps. He preferred to keep them as originally planned with a tunnel underneath for traffic. The Commission of Fine Arts could not come to a decision and decided to call a special meeting the next month to consider this question.

The meeting was held in the office of John Russell Pope in New York. Present in addition to the Commissioners were former architect members of the Commission John Russell Pope, Cass Gilbert, Milton Medary, Louis Ayres, and former landscape architect member Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. At this time both Medary and Olmsted were members of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Also present were representatives of the firm of McKim, Mead and White, and William Partridge, representing Colonel Grant of the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission.

A letter from McKim, Mead and White was read in which they protested against abandoning the steps, both as a watergate to the city, which they considered the most important feature of the whole design, and as an approach to the river for those interested in boating and other water sports. If concessions had to be made to traffic they much preferred to see a tunnel under the steps rather than a surface road which would cut the steps in two. This, they felt, would irreparably

damage the design and be a great annoyance to those who had to cross the traffic to get to the river.

William Adams Delano of the Commission of Fine Arts stated that he sympathized with McKim, Mead and White's views and their protest against the suggestion, at such a late date, that the steps be abandoned. However, he felt that times change, traffic was now a serious problem and the Commission of Fine Arts needed to consider it. He did not like the idea of using a long, dark tunnel and said that after trying to find a solution, several members of both the Fine Arts and Planning Commissions had come to question the steps themselves and whether they could be eliminated without harm to the design. He said that during their discussions several reasons were advanced for abandoning the steps:

1st. That the Mall vista ends with the Lincoln Memorial in Mr. Bacon's scheme. One does not see through the Memorial, as sketched in outline by the Commission of 1901. From the Lincoln Memorial the Mall splits in two—one artery to the right goes to Rock Creek Park, the other to the left crosses the Arlington Bridge; to add a third element in the form of steps leading to the river adds confusion to the composition, for as one stands on the Plaza or on the peristyle of the Memorial one will see before him the road to Rock Creek, the steps leading to the Potomac River, and the Bridge, headed towards the Lee Mansion, and he will ask "What is the real intention?" Either the bridge or the steps should be the dominant motive. Which is it?

2nd. Some of us feel that a wide flight of steps does not make a strong abutment for such an important bridge and that a retaining wall, with a road at the water's edge, would give a more constructible, less costly, more practical and quite as imposing a solution of the problem and at the same time do away with the confusion of intention of the plaza side.

3rd. Whether, considering the very questionable amount of use that these steps will be put to, and the very considerable outlay necessitated, the Commission is justified in advocating a scheme which, I think, everyone will admit, can only be seen to full advantage from the Virginia shore, at which distance it will make little difference whether the strong base on which the Lincoln Memorial stands is formed by a flight of steps or a retaining wall.

4th. That this is not the ideal place for a water gate to Washington. . . . If this water gate is planned only to receive distinguished visitors, it will be used very rarely and when used lead to the back of the Lincoln Memorial where there are no steps to carry one to the Monument; if it is to lead to a basin where canoes and row boats lie, this basin could better be placed on the other side of the river on Columbia Island, where the channel between the Island and the mainland would give a far more adequate landing place for small boats.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Minutes*, 15 March 1928, pp. 5, 6.

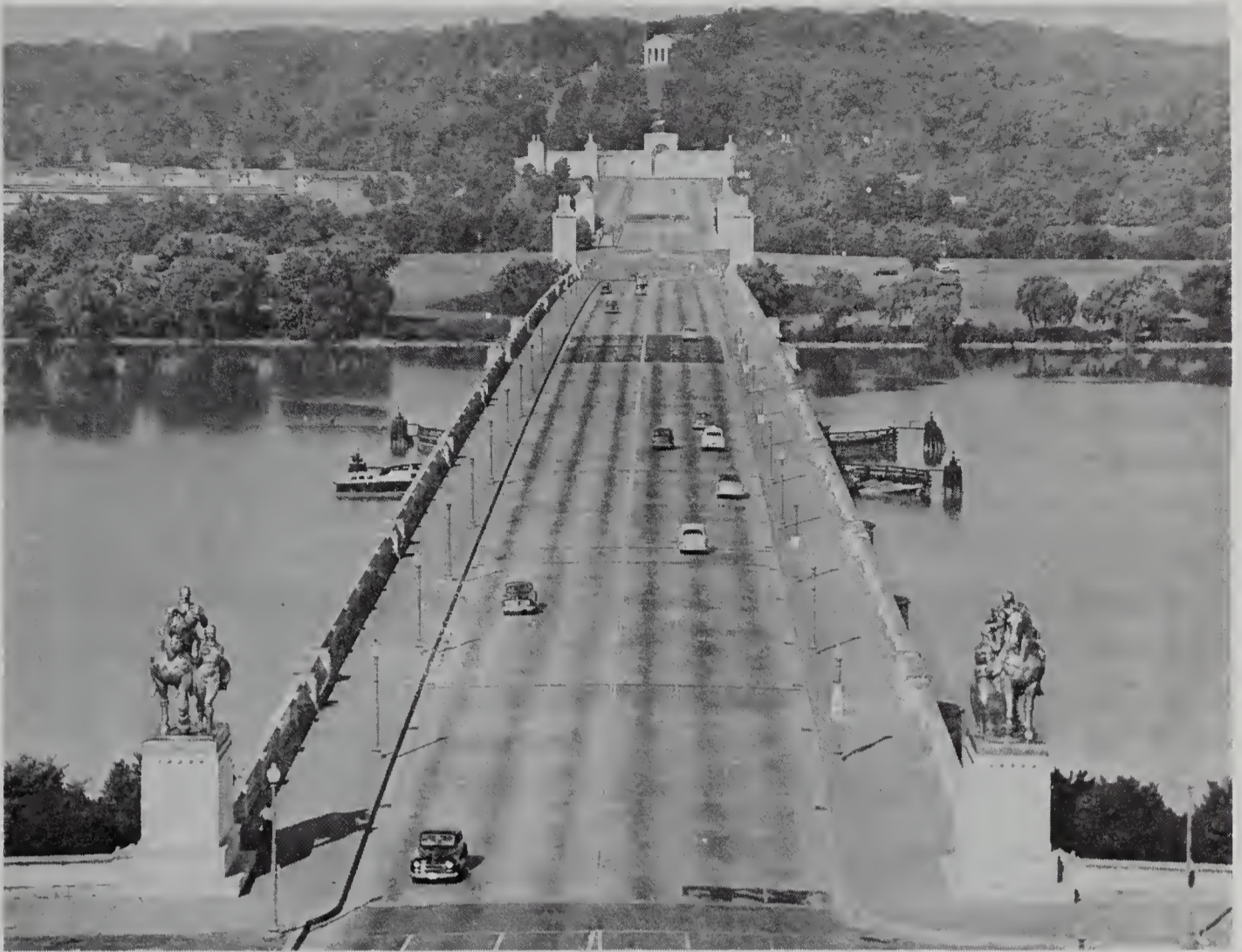
A long discussion followed in which past and present members gave their views. Olmsted agreed that traffic was a serious problem, but felt that it must be solved in an esthetically pleasing manner—not by the use of a dark tunnel which would be disagreeable to drive through; a wall with a road below would be better. Cass Gilbert and William Morris did not object to a tunnel; they did not think it had to be dark and disagreeable. John Russell Pope did not like the retaining wall idea; he thought it would make a crude ending to the composition. He felt that the steps provided a necessary relation between the river and the upper development of the Lincoln Memorial. Milton Medary did not like the steps because they introduced a third point in the axis—they were really “stage scenery.”

Finally, the Commission came to the following conclusions: The steps would be retained but reduced in width; arches would be cut under Rock Creek Parkway and the Bridge, and a roadway carried along the foot of the steps, separating them from the river.

The view that heavy traffic should be kept off the Memorial Bridge and away from the Lincoln Memorial was probably best expressed some years later by James Greenleaf, former landscape architect member of the Commission of Fine Arts and at the time consulting landscape architect to the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission. In speaking about Columbia Island and Lee Highway before the Commission of Fine Arts in 1931 he said:

As to the Lee Highway connection, I seize this opportunity to emphasize the fact that the Bridge should not be allowed to become a traffic bridge. The Arlington Memorial Bridge is essentially part of the park system of Washington and is particularly associated at either end with two of the most significant, even sacred features of the National Capital. The essence of the scheme is this splendid bridge connecting the Lincoln Memorial and the great national cemetery with, on the one hand, the Mount Vernon Boulevard reaching down the river, and on the other, the promised George Washington Memorial Parkway of really magnificent scenic possibilities, passing up stream on the Virginia shore to the Great Falls of the Potomac. In its vital principles this great scheme is simple, grand and beautiful if it is held determinedly to the fundamental basis of the park system and all questions of growing city traffic problems are excluded. I most respectfully but earnestly submit to the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission and to the Commission of Fine Arts that here lies the great opportunity to do the really fine thing. I even venture to point out that here lies the responsibility of both Commissions to rigidly exclude the idea of utilizing the Memorial Bridge as in any sense an entrance or portal into the city for country-wide travel; that here at its dramatic point the scheme of Washington shall not fall short of distinction.

To be specific, and in regard to the Lee Highway connection, the bridge should not be allowed to ever become a



Arlington Memorial Bridge, showing Leo Friedlander's sculptural groups, Columbia Island and the entrance to Arlington Cemetery.
Photograph by Abbie Rowe, National Park Service.

traffic bridge bringing thousands upon thousands of motor people from the Lee Highway into Washington over the Arlington Memorial Bridge, whirling them around the Lincoln Memorial and so into the city. . . . If necessary replace the "Long" or Highway Bridge by a new one of double the capacity and even in time, if needed for future growth, parallel the Key Bridge with another and arrange the city streets accordingly, but never cheapen and confuse the distinctive quality of the Arlington Memorial Bridge and its surroundings as the most significant and most grand part of the park system of the Capital City.¹⁵

At this meeting there was also some discussion about the tall (45 feet) pylons planned for either side of the bridge on the Washington side. There was a feeling that they complicated the view from the Bridge to the Memorial. It was also thought that while the pylons might be in scale with the Bridge, they were out of scale with the Memorial; if necessary, the Bridge design would have to be sacrificed to the Memorial. Ferruccio Vitale, the landscape member of the Commission of Fine Arts, stated the problem in this way:

¹⁵ *Minutes*, 5 August 1931, pp. 2-3.

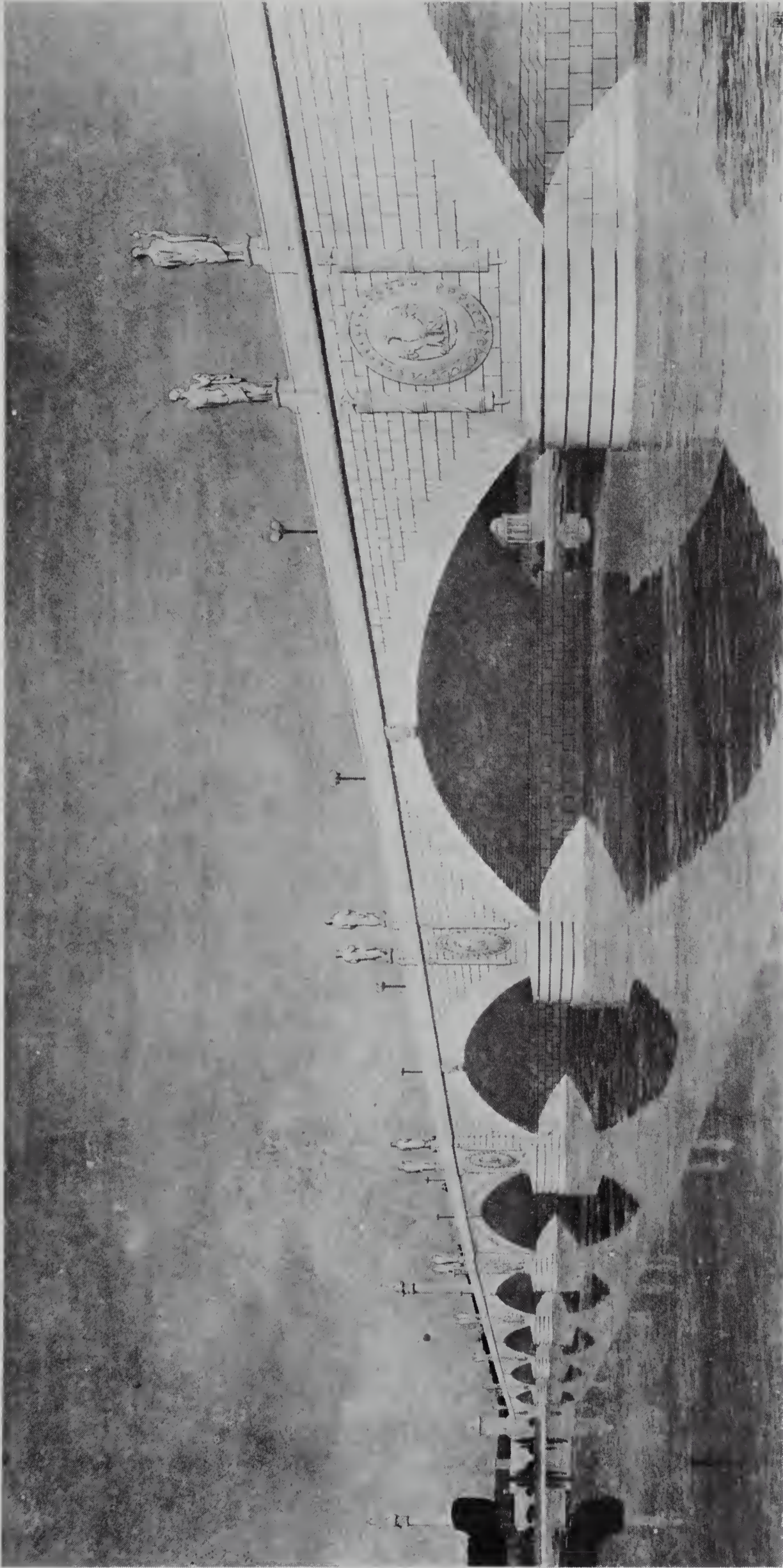
The trouble seems to be fundamental. The design of the bridge is at such a scale that it almost stands out by itself as a magnificent piece of designing in no relation with the Memorial or the other great projects adjacent to it, which should all be treated as one composition.¹⁶

By November 1928 Kendall had very reluctantly given up his pylons and submitted instead a design for sculptured equestrian statues on bases, designed by Leo Friedlander. He admitted that he was "two-thirds persuaded" to give up the pylons by Friedlander's sculpture. Enormous photographs of the sculpture were set up at the Bridge in December, and the Commission was pleased with their appearance. Later, James E. Fraser was selected to design similar groups at the Rock Creek Parkway entrance to the Memorial Plaza. The sculptures were originally to have been granite, then marble, and were ultimately cast in bronze. The casting was done in Italy, a gift from the Italian people. The sculptures were not dedicated until 1951, eighteen years after the Bridge was opened to the public.

The problem of how to treat the Virginia terminus of the bridge occupied the Commission of Fine Arts for many years. The problem here was just where to terminate the great composition of the Mall from the Capitol to the Potomac, and how to reconcile its formal, monumental character with the informal, parklike treatment of Arlington Cemetery and the Virginia shore of the Potomac. In January 1928 the Commission read a letter from Milton Medary (then a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission) and agreed with him that the great axis of the Mall is terminated by the Lincoln Memorial and the two arteries which flow from it: Memorial Bridge and Rock Creek Parkway. They agreed that the Columbia Island end of the bridge and the great entrance to Arlington should be treated with formal but simple dignity, and here the formality should end. However, the problem of achieving this simple dignity was not easily or quickly resolved.

Originally the road across the bridge was to meet an ellipse at Columbia Island with two cross arms, extending north and south, each ending in a circle. Lee Highway was to come in at the northern circle and Mount Vernon Parkway at the south. The bridge road would continue west as the Avenue of Heroes to the great entrance to Arlington Cemetery. The composition was to include circular Greek temples at the cross axis, as well as two colossal columns, 181 feet high, representing the North and the South. Little by little the design was simplified, partly because the Commission thought it too elaborate and partly because the onset of the Depression brought a reduction in funds. The Greek temples and some of the statuary were omitted in 1930, and the

¹⁶ *Minutes*, 6 August 1928, p. 8.



Rendering by McKim, Mead & White showing proposal for Arlington Memorial Bridge with statues on the bridge and the two columns symbolizing the North and South, intended for Columbia Island (left, background). One of the circular Greek temples planned for the Island can be seen through an arch of the bridge.

arms of the cross axis were shortened. At this time the Commission felt that the memorial columns were necessary to the composition and should be retained. It is evident, however, that the members were becoming dubious about the effectiveness of these columns as symbols of the unity of the nation. They asked the architect to restudy them.

This uncertainty culminated in July 1931 when Adolph A. Weinman, the sculptor member of the Commission, made the statement that it might be better not to erect the columns, that "they will be too massive, and as to height, might seem like two smokestacks standing there, and furthermore, would be in conflict with the view of the pylons of the Arlington Memorial Bridge, the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument."¹⁷ The Commission agreed to consider the matter further. Soon other arguments were made against construction of the columns. It was said that they would be a menace to aircraft approaching nearby Hoover Airport, that they would be obstacles to traffic, and that foundations for them would be prohibitively expensive. The architect of the Memorial Bridge, William M. Kendall, felt that the columns were absolutely necessary to his design and even went so far as to write President Hoover (who had asked that the columns be omitted) giving his arguments for keeping them, including a suggestion that the airport be moved if interference with aircraft was really a problem.¹⁸ The Commission of Fine Arts decided to hold the matter of the columns in abeyance as there was no necessity for erecting them immediately, but in December 1931 the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission disapproved the columns and asked the architect to submit a new study. Kendall tried various schemes, as did members of the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. In 1940 a much simplified plan for Columbia Island was submitted, costing about half as much as the original plan. In 1947, General Mehaffrey, the former executive assistant to the Bridge Commission, was complaining about the conditions at Columbia Island Plaza; the Commission of Fine Arts agreed that a restudy of the area should be made by the National Park Service. Nothing much seems to have come of this, and today the Columbia Island terminus of Memorial Bridge bears little resemblance to the original grandiose scheme.

¹⁷ *Minutes*, 1 July 1931, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Minutes*, 29 October 1931, Exhibit A.

The Mall

During the years that the Commission of Fine Arts was considering the Arlington Memorial Bridge, it was also looking toward the eventual development of the other end of the grand composition—the area of the Mall from the Washington Monument to the Capitol. By 1920, the Grant Memorial was nearly completed at the foot of Capitol Hill and the Meade Memorial under construction. Through the persistent efforts of the Commission of Fine Arts and several members of Congress, the old Botanical Gardens were finally moved off this section of the Mall to a location immediately to the south, and plans were made for a true botanic garden, or national arboretum, in the northeast section of the city.

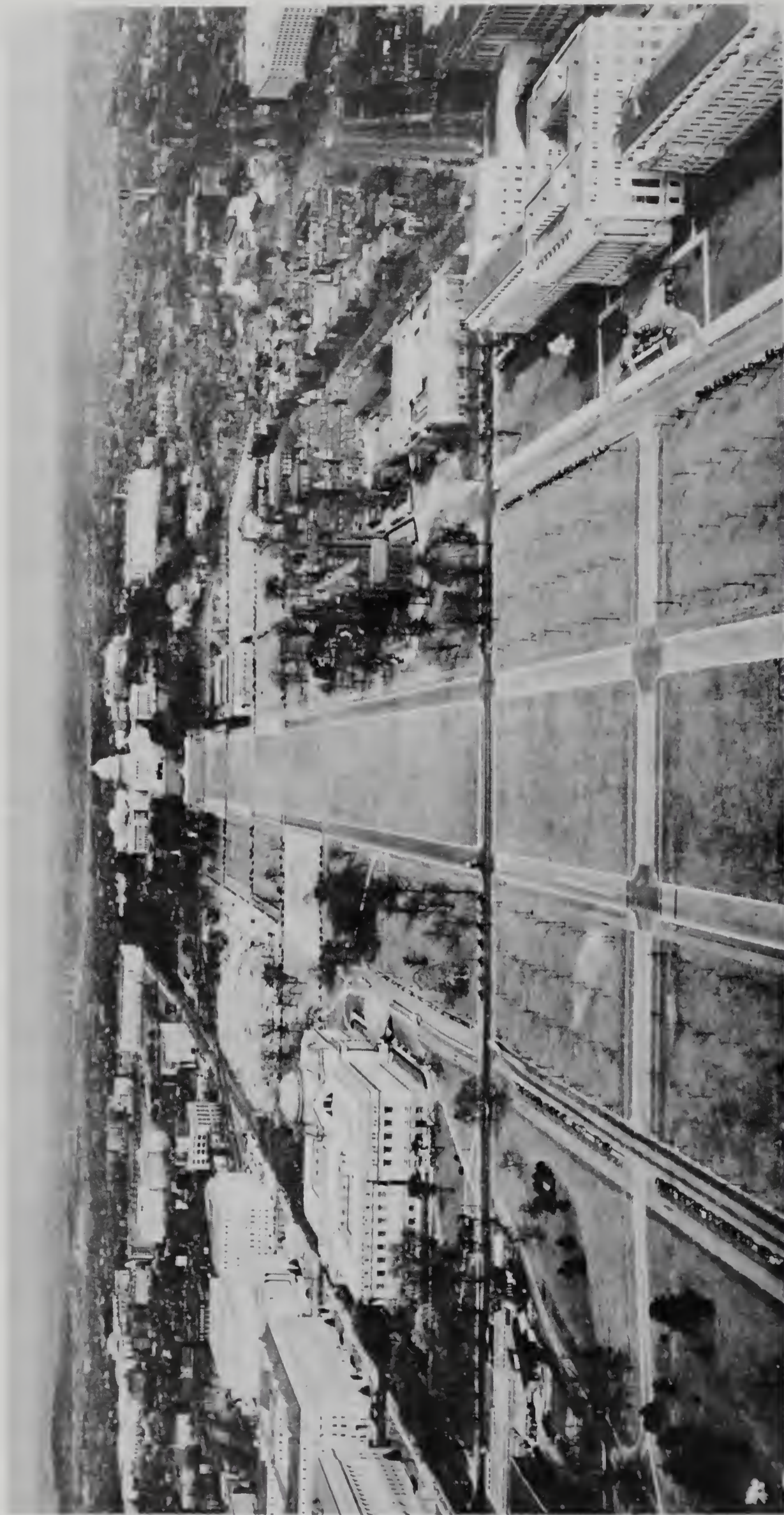
By late 1921 the Commission had prepared a report giving its recommendations for the Mall. The report said, in part:

The landscape work in the Mall has now reached a point which will require an increasing amount of time and attention on the part of the Commission. The gradual disappearance of the temporary war buildings will leave large spaces for drives and planting. The location of these roads was in part fixed when the temporary buildings were located. While the treatment of the Mall must be progressive, yet large portions of it will call for attention in the immediate future.¹⁹

The report called for a complete set of grading plans and profiles and for a drawing to show the Mall axis, the roads and walks, and the location of present and proposed buildings on the Mall from the Grant Memorial to the Lincoln Memorial.

During the late 1920's the Commission of Fine Arts was occupied, along with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, with problems of laying out the Mall roads. The north-south cross roads were a special problem, especially Twelfth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets, where grade changes and traffic problems brought suggestions for grade separations at these points. No conclusion was reached at this time, and it was only recently that Twelfth and Ninth Streets were depressed. The Commission was also urging immediate construction of the east-west roads within the Mall. The Federal Triangle building program was getting underway, and the Commission felt that this was an excellent chance to use the soil from the building excavations to grade the Mall and build the roads. Legislation was finally enacted in March 1929 which provided for the development of the Mall and Union Square west of the Capitol. In May 1931 the Commission approved the plan for roads and planting. All good trees which were in the way of

¹⁹ *Minutes*, 12 Nov. 1921, p. 6.



The Mall, 1938, showing the newly established roads and four rows of trees. Note the excavated site for the National Gallery of Art to the left of the Mall, behind the domed Natural History Museum building.

construction were to be moved and used elsewhere, as there was considerable public concern about digging up the Mall.

During 1932 and 1933 there was continued discussion at both the Fine Arts and Planning Commission meetings about the kind of tree to be planted on the Mall. Plans called for four rows of trees, fifty feet apart, on either side of the central green space. William Adams Delano, a former architect member of the Commission of Fine Arts and at that time on the Planning Commission, favored the use of a variety of trees. Most members of both Commissions, however, thought that the area needed the regularity and degree of formality which would be achieved by using the same kind of tree. Frederick Law Olmsted agreed with this, and in a letter written to Frederic A. Delano of the Planning Commission he stated his reasons:

. . . It is proposed that the four rows of trees on each side of the open center of the Mall, stretching from the Capitol to the Washington Monument be of different kinds. It seems to me that this is a very unfortunate suggestion. The essence of this part of the scheme is its reasonable formality. The McMillan plan contemplated American Elms, and even went so far as to consider carefully choosing these trees to avoid as much as possible individual variations.

The situation is not at all comparable to that, for instance, at Versailles where the allées appear to be cut through a bosquet²⁰ of considerable extent, and where the view does not penetrate the bosquet and the trunks of the trees are not an element in the design. There are but four rows of trees on each side of the Mall and these are intended to form a sort of colonnade which is visible not only from the Mall but from the buildings along the Mall and to a very real extent in transverse and diagonal glimpses through the colonnade from the four roadways of the Mall. It was considered therefore, at the beginning, that the similarity of these trees, their high canopy of foliage and the gothic arch effect of their branching were essential parts of the design. Plainly it is undesirable to plant trees of different kinds and then spend money to give them a similar form by pruning and large scale topiary work.

I do not consider that there is any appreciably greater likelihood of a loss of good appearance through insect attacks if these trees are of one kind than if they were of several kinds. This is not a case of forestry over a large area. . .²¹

A year later the Dutch elm disease had become a problem and Olmsted suggested waiting until studies could be made before proceeding with the planting. Eventually the elms were planted, and while some have succumbed to disease the American elm is still being used on the Mall.

²⁰ A French word meaning grove.

²¹ *Minutes*, 18 November 1932, Appendix H of the attached minutes of the joint meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

In May 1934 the Commission of Fine Arts was discussing Mall lighting. Charles Moore hoped that a lamp could be designed which would be used in all Government work which required something different from the usual District street lamp. The first design submitted was a lamp with two globes. Several of these were erected on the Mall for the Commission to inspect, and the general feeling was that the double lamp was acceptable if the wattage could be reduced. Later in the year the members were shown a design for a single lamp, and upon being told that this would give enough light for the Mall decided to proceed in this direction. Lee Lawrie, the sculptor member of the Commission, suggested several changes in the design. In December 1934 the revised design was submitted and approved by the Commission.

The Act of Congress which provided for the Mall roads and trees also included funds for the development of Union Square at the foot of the Capitol. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., whose father had laid out the Capitol grounds, was asked to design the square. When he presented his plans to the Commission of Fine Arts in April 1934, two of the Commissioners, Gilmore Clarke and Egerton Swartwout, thought that he was treating the area too informally. They preferred the more monumental treatment shown on the Plan of 1901, which made rather radical changes to the whole area. First Street was to be straightened, cutting back into the Capitol grounds one hundred feet; the circles with the Garfield and Peace Monuments were to be obliterated; and the diagonal lines of Pennsylvania and Maryland Avenues were to be changed to a straight east-west direction between First and Second Streets, N.W., thus forming a new rectangular area to the west of the Capitol called Union Square.

Olmsted, as the only surviving member of the McMillan Commission, said that this Commission had not given the Union Square area intensive thought, that the plan for it "was embodied in the report under pressure of time as a tentative solution in spite of expressed doubts within the Commission as to some of its features."²² These doubts related principally to straightening the curve in First Street, the introduction of a high terrace wall on the east side of this street and the use of a series of water basins and fountains within the Capitol grounds. Olmsted also pointed out that the Grant Monument as built differed in size and configuration from what had been planned in 1901 and the Meade Monument had been added.

In the report submitted to the Commission along with his preliminary plans, Olmsted reviewed some of the history of the treatment of the western portion of the Capitol grounds to reinforce his argument for developing it in an informal manner. He discussed L'Enfant's use

²² *Minutes*, 23 April 1934, Exhibit I, p. 1.



Union Square, Plan of 1901.

of a curved line to terminate the Capitol grounds on the west so that the important diagonals of Maryland and Pennsylvania Avenues would have "their ends 'cut square,' so to speak, at right angles to their own direction, instead of being cut off diagonally to their own direction by a north-south street of secondary importance." Then he noted that curved lines were shown in all subsequent plans. The straight line of First Street in Latrobe's plan of 1803 he laid not to the architect's preference for this form, "but to the niggardly 'trimming' policy then being followed by the public authorities, under which policy L'Enfant's well-planned and liberal allowance of public grounds on the west side of the Capitol site was progressively curtailed by alienation to private landowners..." Then he went on to discuss what had happened when Thomas Walter enlarged the Capitol in the 1850's, making necessary the repurchase of some of the alienated land:

It was Walter who at that time drew the curving line of First Street that now marks the western boundary of the Capitol Grounds, doubtless because he recognized, as his predecessors had done, the value of receiving three great converging vistas against an arc drawn normal to all of them, a principle of design entirely familiar and entirely tenable even though not necessarily controlling. As above stated, this curving line is almost identical in position and radius with one which was marked by L'Enfant on his original plan of 1791. . .

Some time after the Civil War the Peace Monument was placed just outside of this line on the axis of Pennsylvania Avenue, and the small circles surrounding it and the corresponding point on the axis of Maryland Avenue cut into the large simple arc which Walter had drawn.

My father was called upon to design the treatment of the Capitol Grounds during the 1870's and 1880's and he accepted Walter's curving line on the west as satisfactory. I do not know what his attitude was in regard to the two 'scallops' in that line at Pennsylvania and Maryland Avenues; but personally I am inclined to class them with certain other architectural details (characteristic of what is rightly called in Glenn Brown's *History of the United States Capitol* 'an unfortunate period in our architectural history') which did not measure up to the prevailing dignity and impressiveness of my father's general design. . . .

The present Commission for Enlarging the Capitol Grounds, in addition to the new land acquired toward the Union Station, is now at last re-acquiring for the Government the land between B Street and Pennsylvania Avenue east of First Street which L'Enfant had the foresight to reserve in 1791.

Entirely apart from the above historical considerations a careful examination of the outlook from the west front of the Capitol, bearing in mind the ultimate removal of the encumbrance of temporary buildings from the vista toward the Washington Monument, carries a conviction that the length of the unbroken foreground unit of that vista, within the

present Capitol Grounds and free from the interrupting cross lines of any roadway, is even now none too long and that any shortening of it as in the studies of 1901 would be distinctly unfortunate.

Furthermore, in looking toward the Capitol from distant points on Pennsylvania Avenue, the place at which the unbroken street vista terminates, against the mass of trees just where the ground begins to rise toward the dome, seems very satisfactory; and the accenting of that spot by the Peace Monument (so distant that its unfortunate details are imperceptible) is good. To shorten that street vista, to weaken it by debouching into a wide open space much further west than the Peace Monument, would reduce its simple impressiveness. . .²³

Olmsted's plan showed a central open space in which was a long, axial grass panel flanked by broad walks. Large trees bordered this area to the north and south. Because of the great length of the Grant Monument the open space widened to allow ample room around the monument and at the same time differentiate the Union Square unit from the Mall and from the Capitol grounds. The report mentioned that a reflecting pool could be planned for the central panel but was not essential. There were no funds for it in that depression year anyway.

The Commission of Fine Arts, however, asked Olmsted to revise his plans along the more formal lines suggested. He presented his revisions in June, but the Commission was still not convinced; Swartwout, in particular, wanted a plan close to that of 1901. He felt that the design of Union Square was an architectural, not a landscape problem. Clarke thought that Olmsted's plan was a makeshift one; in spite of the very limited funds available, he wanted the "ultimate scheme" prepared and approved. When Olmsted was asked if he would try again to come up with a design embodying the 1901 Plan, he was hesitant. First of all, there were no funds to carry it out, and secondly, there were three major difficulties: the possible failure of such a scheme to work out a satisfactory relationship with the diagonals of Pennsylvania and Maryland Avenues, the possible interruption of the vista between the Capitol and the Washington Monument with this kind of development, and the likelihood that a paved plaza (which the Commission wanted) would weaken the relationship between the Mall and the Capitol.

The Commission's position was that it wanted to adhere as much as possible to the 1901 Plan and that there could be no compromise between that plan and Olmsted's. The members thought it best to do nothing until they saw a plan they could approve enthusiastically.

However, Olmsted agreed to restudy his plan along the lines suggested, and in September 1934 submitted a revised version. This, too, was far from the grandiose scheme of 1901; the high terrace walls west

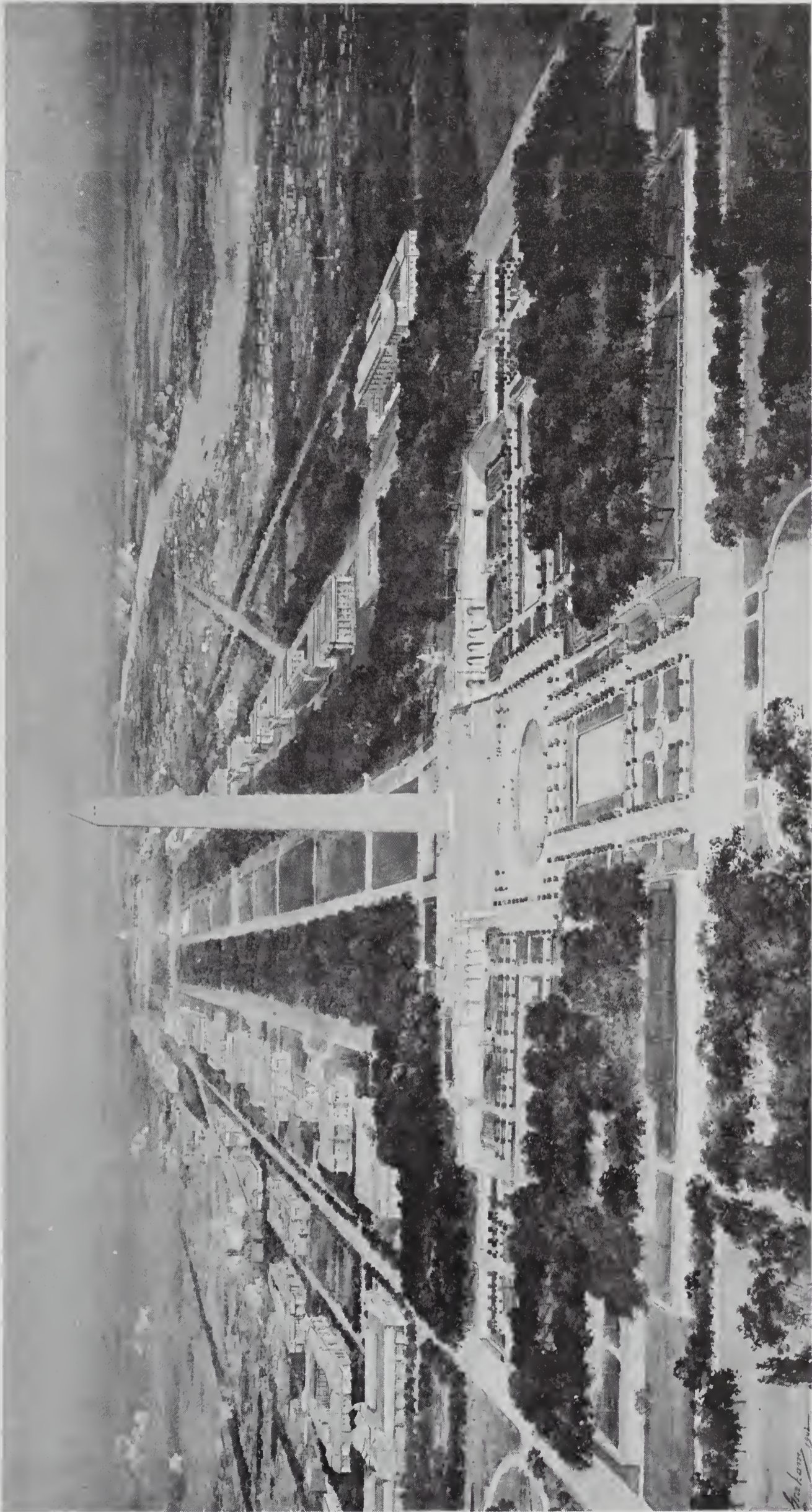
²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

of the Capitol were not shown, nor was the large paved plaza. Olmsted argued convincingly that it was never intended that the 1901 plan be depended upon for details, and added that building the enormous plaza would be distinctly undesirable, considering the hot Washington summers. After much study and the incorporation of some changes suggested by the members, the Commission agreed to approve Olmsted's plan.

It is interesting to note that Olmsted, a member of the McMillan Commission and of the original Commission of Fine Arts, was frequently more willing to depart from the specific suggestions of the Plan of 1901 than were later members of the Commission of Fine Arts who had not participated in the development of the plan. This has been seen earlier in his attitude toward removing the cross arms of the Reflecting Pool and the watergate steps at the Lincoln Memorial.

There is no further record in the minutes of the Commission of Fine Arts regarding Union Square until 1965, when it came up again as part of a new Pennsylvania Avenue plan. At this time it was suggested that the entire area in front of the Grant Monument, filling the space between Maryland and Pennsylvania Avenues and extending westward to a point between Second and Third Streets, be used for a reflecting pool. Originally, this was to have been a three part pool, with the center part to be a skating rink. The Commission of Fine Arts was not in favor of a skating rink in this location but approved a pool, which has since been built.

Another part of the Mall which was to receive a formal, monumental treatment was the area immediately surrounding the Washington Monument. The Plan of 1901 called for an elaborate development of terraces, balustrades, pavilions, pools and fountains. Toward the end of 1927 the Commission was looking forward to the George Washington Bicentennial in 1932 and consulting with the Planning Commission about getting plans underway for the development around the Monument. Legislation was introduced in Congress in 1928 for completion of the Washington Monument Grounds, and the Commission of Fine Arts looked at several plans in 1928-1929. However, doubts about the soil conditions around the foundations of the Monument caused both Commissions to ask for a full report by an engineering firm before any definite plans were considered. The engineers' report, issued in 1931, stated that the design proposed by the Plan of 1901 showed heavy loading over an area where loading should be kept to a minimum; and excavation where, if anything, fill seemed to be required to increase stability. It recommended abandoning the plan. The Planning Commission developed two new designs: one a formal, balustraded plan by William A. Delano; the other an informal plan by Olmsted and Henry V. Hubbard. Both plans differed considerably from the Plan of 1901, and the Commission of Fine Arts did not find them satisfactory. The feeling was that they did not treat the ground "on a scale of



Washington Monument Gardens, Plan of 1901.

elegance, taste and beauty corresponding to the treatment of the grounds of the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial," nor did they recognize the White House axis in any appropriate way.²⁴

The engineers told the Commissions that any extensive changes—even those suggested in the revised plans—could endanger the stability of the Monument unless the foundations were carried down to bed-rock. This the Commission of Fine Arts wanted to do, until U.S. Grant III, director of Public Buildings and Public Parks, told Charles Moore that if the attempt were made to underpin the Monument, the risk would be great, "in view of the fact that an accident, a structural failure, or a mistake spells immediate and complete disaster, with no possibility of correction."²⁵ This, plus the lack of funds during the Depression, tabled any further action. No major changes have been made since; the circle of flags around the base of the Monument was added in 1959. The flags were not approved by the Commission of Fine Arts.

The revival of interest in the Mall during the 1960's has been mentioned in connection with Union Square and the reflecting pool recently completed there. A number of major changes were suggested when a new master plan for the area was presented by the National Park Service and architects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in 1965. Only a few have as yet been approved by the Commission of Fine Arts. One project recently completed is the tunneling of Ninth Street under the Mall. Twelfth Street was tunneled in 1959, and it will be recalled that there were suggestions in the 1920's that Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets be treated in the same way. When the new Mall plan was first presented all the north-south streets crossing the Mall were to be tunneled. The Commission of Fine Arts would not agree to this. The chairman, William Walton, stated the views of the members when he said:

. . . we are not yet convinced that the automobile can be totally banned from this great area without turning it into a park preserve which is, finally, not its true purpose. . . There are times when the residents of this city get great enjoyment out of seeing this, even though they are not stopping. But that doesn't mean that we are in favor of great lines of traffic going through this area all the time. But we think that there is probably some slight compromise that is possible; for instance, of keeping open two cross roads on the surface.²⁶

Three elements in the 1965 plan have been approved: Constitution Gardens, in the area just north of the Reflecting Pool where the World War I Navy and Munitions buildings stood, the gravel-covered walks in the eastern section, and the skating rink and National Gallery of Art sculpture garden, on the cross axis of the Mall across from the

²⁴ *Minutes*, 4 October 1932, Exhibit L.

²⁵ *Minutes*, 18 November 1932, Exhibit G-1.

²⁶ *Minutes*, 16 November 1966, Exhibit I.

Archives building. This cross axis has also been emphasized by the construction of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden on the south side of the Mall. This building was originally to have had a sunken sculpture garden cutting across the Mall. This interruption of the central panel was not approved by the Commission of Fine Arts and the design was revised.

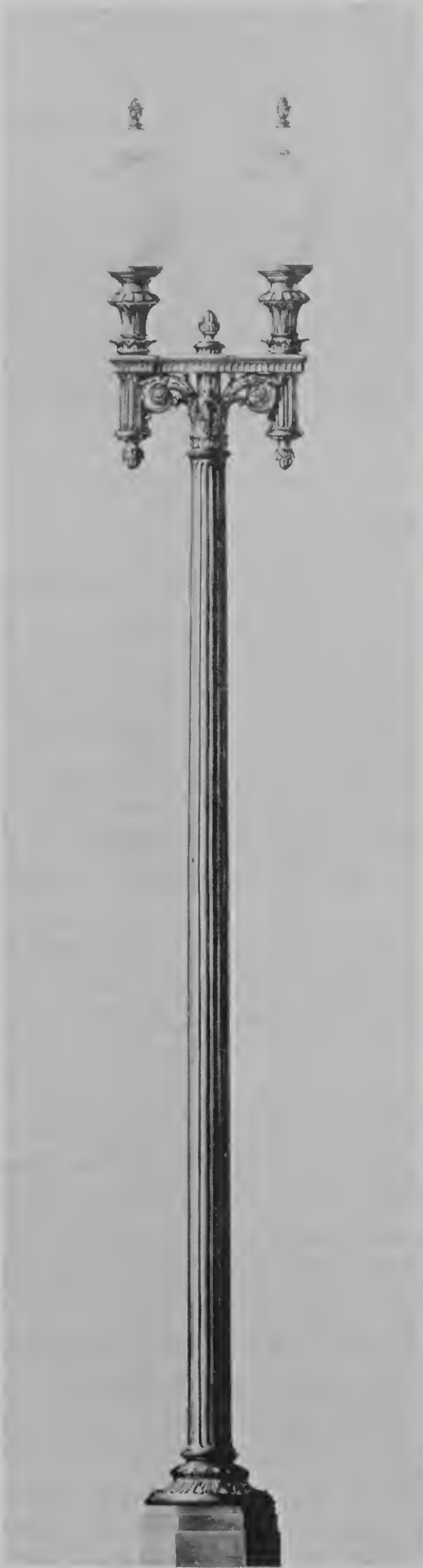
The appearance of the Mall was changed during the 1960's and 1970's by the construction of several other major buildings approved by the Commission of Fine Arts: the Museum of History and Technology at Fourteenth Street and Constitution Avenue, the addition to the National Gallery of Art at Fourth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Air and Space Museum on Independence Avenue between Fourth and Seventh Streets.

Parks

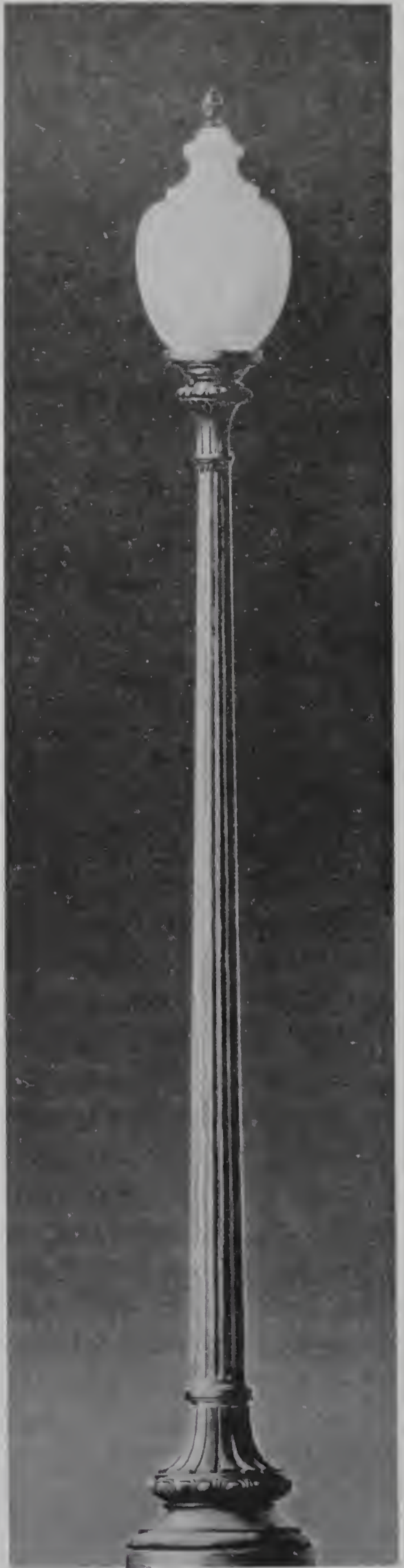
The projects discussed so far have all been major ones, concerned with the development of the Mall area. At the same time these were being reviewed, the Commission was considering such widely diverse projects as coins and medals, war memorials here and abroad, schools, firehouses and other buildings for the District of Columbia and such ubiquitous items as street lights and street trees. The two most widely used street lights in Washington were named after Commission members who participated in their design: the Millet lamppost, a single lamp standard first installed in 1912, and the Bacon double lamppost, designed in 1923.

The plans for all public parks also fall under the purview of the Commission of Fine Arts. The design of the parks themselves, the nature of the planting and the design of structures within the parks are all reviewed by the Commission. In its early years the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed plans for the development of Rock Creek Park, established by Congress in 1890, and for the parkway which runs through it. The development of Anacostia Park and of East Potomac Park as a recreation center were other large park projects submitted before 1920, as was Montrose Park in Georgetown. In regard to this park, the Commission's Report for 1916 said: "Not a little difficulty has been experienced in preparing plans for turning the old Montrose estate into a park to combine the needed facilities for sports like tennis and croquet, while at the same time retaining the naturalistic features of the noble slopes and deep ravines."²⁷ The plans for Meridian Hill Park on Sixteenth Street, with its elaborate architectural treatment and water cascades, plus the development of the site for the Buchanan statue at the Florida Avenue end of the park, occupied the Commission for approximately thirty years, from 1913 well into the 1940's.

²⁷ *Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1916, p. 15.



The Bacon lamppost.



The Millet lamppost.

The Commission of Fine Arts, in the first years of its existence, urged that the Civil War forts which ring the city be developed as parks. This is a project which came before the Commission again in 1975 as new structures, signs and other facilities were planned for these parks in preparation for the nation's Bicentennial. Another park project which has concerned the Commission since its beginning is the National Zoo. In the 1960's and 1970's this became a very active project, beginning with the approval of a master plan in 1967 and continuing with the submission of plans for new buildings, roads, parking facilities and landscaping.

Smaller parks also fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission. These include Washington's well-known circles and the triangular areas formed by the intersection of the diagonal avenues with the



Meridian Hill Park, water cascades; Horace Peaslee, architect. Photograph by National Capital Region, National Park Service.

rectilinear street pattern. The circles, opening up vistas throughout the city and providing a welcome change of scene with their statues and green spaces, are a distinctive feature of Washington, and were especially so in the days when they were surrounded by fine residences. As automobile traffic in the city increased, however, and driving around the circles became more difficult, pressure was brought upon both the Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts to approve cutting through them with streetcar tracks and traffic lanes. In 1931 the District of Columbia Highway Department proposed to cut through Thomas and Logan Circles. This was strongly rejected by the Commission of Fine Arts, especially by James Greenleaf, the landscape architect member, who stated that this "would mutilate the Plan of Washington and would simply be yielding to the desire of motorists."²⁸

In 1933 U.S. Grant III, Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks, wrote Charles Moore, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, asking his opinion of taking the Fourteenth Street streetcar line through, instead of around, Thomas Circle. The Commission of Fine Arts was firm in its disapproval of any such alteration to the circle. In his reply to Grant, Moore wrote:

. . . The proposition to run street cars and automobiles through Thomas Circle in order to facilitate traffic at rush hours morning and evening has created a critical situation in Washington planning. If Thomas Circle is so treated, the next demand, equally or even more insistent, will be made to destroy Dupont Circle on Connecticut Avenue. Then one by one the other circles will disappear; and so the distinction of Washington among American cities will be ruined.

Thomas Circle takes its name from General George H. Thomas, whose statue adorns its center. . . . Facing the circle are the Luther Memorial Church and the Luther statue; also the newly completed Christian Church designed by John Russell Pope in the Sir Christopher Wren tradition, an edifice singularly dignified and beautiful. The Thomas statue and both churches depend for effectiveness on maintaining the extent and integrity of Thomas Circle.

Dupont Circle has for its central feature the Dupont Memorial Fountain, of rare beauty, designed by Daniel Chester French and Henry Bacon, and given to Washington by the Dupont family to replace an obsolete portrait statue of Admiral Dupont. The gleaming white fountain situated among great trees is seen through long vistas of arching elms formed by the converging streets. Its beauty and effectiveness should be preserved. To destroy either of these circles would be to commit an act of vandalism, perpetrated at the expense of the people of the United States. They, literally, own the streets of the old city of Washington. Of what avail is it to spend

²⁸ *Minutes*, 1 July 1931, p. 7.



Thomas Circle, c. 1915. The John Russell Pope church mentioned in the text now stands on the site of the large house to the left. Photograph courtesy Martin Luther King Library, Washingtoniana Division.

tens of millions on the adornment of the Nation's Capital with public buildings and parks and at the same time destroy those beauty spots which give charm and significance to Washington as a capital city! . .

The Commission note the protests from representative Citizens Associations, the congregations of the churches facing Thomas Circle, the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and many private citizens. . .²⁹

The Commission of Fine Arts has also been concerned with Washington's street trees. After receiving a letter of protest from the Garden Clubs of America about the widespread destruction of trees because of street widening in the 1920's, Charles Moore wrote U.S. Grant a letter, which said, in part:

. . .Meantime the trees have been planted along the streets and in the so-called parking areas of Washington and have become the chief beauty of the city. The American people are so used to shaded streets that they do not appreciate fully this element in the beauty of Washington. To foreign visitors, however, the trees form a great attraction in themselves. . .

The Commission of Fine Arts believe that Washington is the unique city of this country. . . . Whatever business exists does so by reason of the fact that this is a capital city. Every

²⁹ *Minutes*, 26 May 1933, Exhibit F.

means, therefore, should be taken to preserve the homelike character of the city for the benefit of the thousands of people who are employed by the Government and whose presence here makes the business of the city. The home-like character of Washington should always be emphasized.

The Commission have noticed with grave concern the glaringly inadequate appropriations made for the planting and care of trees. . . . As a result . . . empty tree spaces prevail even around the most significant parks. . .

In the newly developed district of the Northeast it will be fifteen years before the trees attain any appreciable size and as a result that whole area when seen from the hills about Washington looks like a tented field. Provision should be made for an adequate Arboretum to supply trees 10 to 15 years old for planting in the streets of Washington. . . .

This Commission believe there is no project in the planning of the District of Columbia which deserves more thorough, adequate and comprehensive study than the planting and care of trees. When making arrangements for the public buildings in the Triangle, this Commission called attention to the need for well planted and well developed courts. It is with a view to supplementing those suggestions that the Commission of Fine Arts urge upon the National Capital Park and Planning Commission the immediate study of the tree problem in connection with street widening.³⁰

Policy

The minutes of the meetings of the Commission of Fine Arts, especially those from the first two decades of its existence, contain a number of interesting letters stating Commission policies. Naturally, some of these have changed over the years. An example is the early Commission directive to the District of Columbia Commissioners asking that some uniform style of architecture be adopted for public buildings. A letter written in 1911 stated:

. . . In the opinion of the Commission the general aspect of the District of Columbia would be improved if some uniform style of school architecture could be adopted and adhered to, and the same may be said in respect to engine houses and other public buildings. The adoption of a style for each class of public buildings would not in any way prevent originality in adapting a specific building to its particular needs; and, in Washington where the architecture is of so heterogeneous a nature, similarity in public buildings would add much to the impressiveness of the city.³¹

³⁰ *Minutes*, 28 May 1927, Exhibit J-1.

³¹ *Minutes*, 15 February 1911, Exhibit C.

In general the classic styles of architecture were preferred at that time. In the following month the members of the Commission of Fine Arts, in a conference with the District Commissioners, suggested that the Elizabethan style for school buildings was unsuited to Washington and the Georgian style most desirable. The eclectic styles of the Victorian period were not looked upon with favor. For example, efforts were made throughout a long period of time to remodel the ornate State, War and Navy Building (now the Old Executive Office Building) in classic fashion, so that it would resemble the Treasury. In 1917 John Russell Pope submitted tentative "suggestions" for remodeling this building which were enthusiastically endorsed by Franklin Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy. In a letter to Charles Moore in the Commission's files, dated 24 October 1917, Mr. Roosevelt said: "I need not tell you that I am much interested in the sketch of Mr. Pope. It has always been a pet plan of mine to get this building to conform to the general scheme of the Treasury." However, funds were not available, and it was not until 1930 that a remodeling was again suggested. At this time the plans were prepared by Waddy B. Wood, a Washington architect who soon afterward designed the new Interior Department building. The Commission of Fine Arts approved these plans in general, but in 1934 it noted that Congress was holding the plans in abeyance because of cost, estimated at three million dollars. In 1944 Wood's design was submitted again. This time the cost was eight million, and the remodeling was once more delayed, pending the end of World War II. Of interest is the fact that during the discussion the members "admitted that it is an interesting old office building, representing an era about seventy-five years ago when the French influence on American architecture prevailed."³² In the 1950's there were plans to raze the building, but in the 1960's the Commission of Fine Arts, under the leadership of its chairman, William Walton, was advocating its preservation and restoration. The tide had turned; the ornate Victorian "mistakes" were once again acceptable.

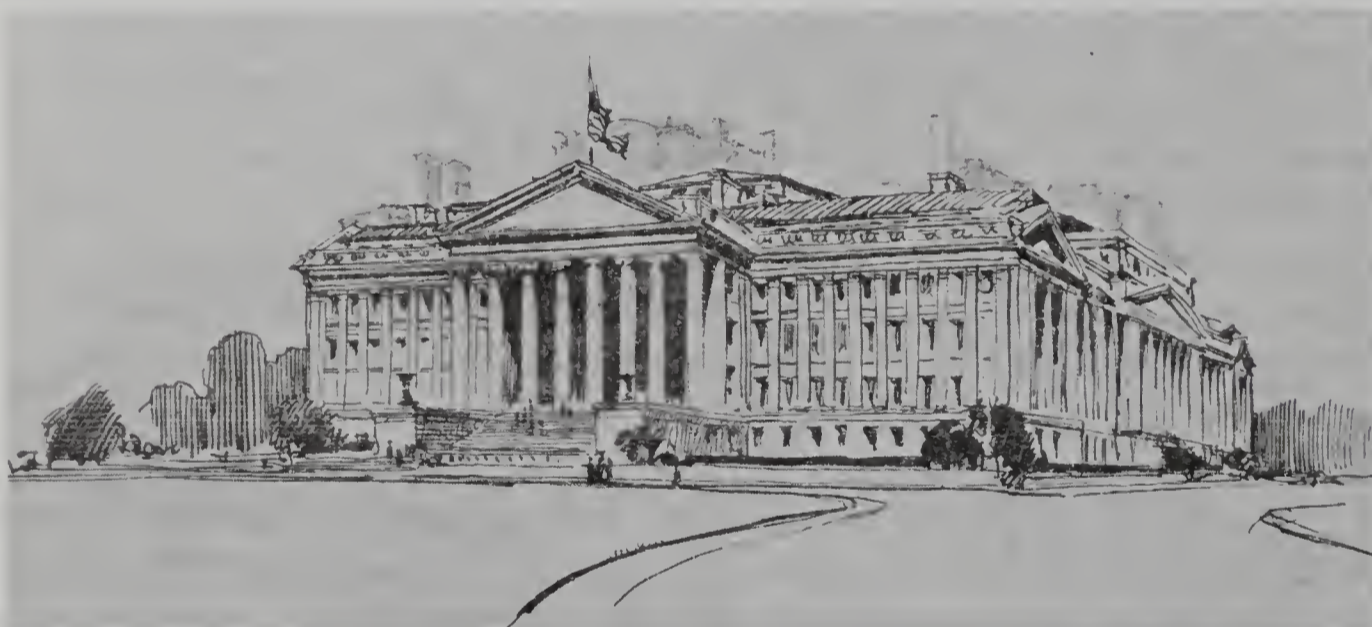
In 1944, at the time the Commission was referring to the Old Executive Office Building as "interesting," Gilmore Clarke, then Chairman, made a speech in which he confirmed the change which was taking place in the Commission's policy in regard to architectural style. He said:

During the last decade the Commission have witnessed material changes in the general character of artistic creation, particularly within the field of architecture; changes in our economic and in our social life are clearly manifest in every phase of human endeavor. Insofar as the National Capital is concerned, changes in architectural expression fortunately have

³² *Minutes*, 18 May 1944, p. 6.



Old view of the State, War and Navy Building, now the Old Executive Office Building; Alfred B. Mullett, architect. Photograph courtesy Library of Congress.



John Russell Pope's sketch for remodeling of State, War and Navy, 1917. Original roof structure and chimneys pencilled in.



Waddy B. Wood's design for remodeling State, War and Navy, 1930.

been gradual for, as you are fully aware, the Commission have not sanctioned the abandonment of the classic background which was the basis for rebuilding the City in the years of its renaissance, stimulated by the Senate Park Commission in 1901. While recently we have not invited the incorporation of those details on buildings, which particularly distinguish Greek and Roman monuments, we have urged adherence to beauty of form, to excellence of proportions and to permanence of materials, all attributes of design exemplary of the art of the architecture of the past. These attributes, we believe, must continue to dominate the design of our important governmental structures as well as certain other buildings erected as important elements in the great unfinished fabric which is Washington. In some of the finest buildings of the Capital the architects departed from a slavish adherence to details represented in classic forms but, nevertheless, followed the fundamental basic principles of design which guided the artistic leaders of the Greek and Roman worlds and of the Renaissance. For example, no one, to my knowledge, has expressed the opinion that the home of the National Academy of Sciences by the late Bertram G. Goodhue or the Folger Shakespeare Library by Paul P. Cret are incongruous in the Washington scene. Thus, as architectural designs are simplified, we make room for rich embellishment by sculptor and by painter and thus provide a greater distinction in our buildings, a distinction which will tend to make them wholly American in flavor. The strict and rigid compliance with the tenets of the classical school in architecture, which have obtained altogether too long in Washington, must be abandoned in favor of a more fresh approach to the problems which will confront the designers of new buildings in the future.

He also alluded to some of the unsuitable designs which the Commission had prevented from becoming reality:

I wish I had time to tell you of some of the monstrosities and of ill-considered projects which the Commission of Fine Arts have prevented over a period of more than three decades. These preventive accomplishments may be said to lie buried in the files; they constitute the records of disapproval of all manner of unsuitable and inappropriate designs which, fortunately, will never be realized.³³

That the Commission of Fine Arts saw itself as a group concerned primarily with quality of design and not with ornamentation is apparent in this letter concerning bridge design, sent to one of the District of Columbia Commissioners in 1927 by Charles Moore:

Since receiving your letter in regard to the new bridge at M Street I have been looking over the hearings before the Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. . . I find that

³³ *Minutes*, 18 February 1944. Address by Gilmore Clarke before the Joint Committee on the National Capital.

one of the first questions asked by the Committee was whether the plans had been submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts. The reply was that the plans had not reached the stage for submission. This answer disclosed on the part of the official a common but fundamental error in conception, and that misunderstanding has been repeated. The error is that the Commission is concerned merely with the ornaments placed on the bridge, and that by the use of ornament a bridge may be made architecturally satisfactory. To show how fundamental is this misconception one has but to regard the Key Bridge,—a successful structure from the point of view of both architects and the public. This bridge is without ornament. It gets its distinction solely from the proportions of its arches—a matter over which this Commission spent much time and thought, trying out with the architect of the bridge various designs before settling on the right one. . .

The plans submitted are not suited to a park structure, and they cannot be made suitable, because the design is fundamentally bad. A bridge constructed along such lines would be a perpetual eyesore. This result is just what the Congressional Committee sought to avoid by requiring that the plans be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts. Nothing remains, therefore, for the Commission to do, other than to report that the bridge should not be built according to the plans prepared. . .³⁴

Early in its existence the Commission established a policy, still adhered to, of upholding strict controls over building heights in Washington. In a letter written to the Secretary of the Treasury in September 1914, in reference to a building for the Interior Department to be erected in the vicinity of the White House, the Commission made the following general statements about building heights:

. . . You say that the prospective building, being a Federal building, is, therefore, not subject to the District of Columbia regulations limiting the height of buildings. . .

If high buildings are to be erected by the Government in this city, private individuals or corporations should be permitted to do likewise. . . The development of high buildings in American cities has been due, in large part, to the increasing demand for space in certain congested centers. In Washington there are no congested areas calling for high structures. . .

In this connection the Commission desire to call attention to certain principles which they believe should govern building in the District of Columbia. Washington is primarily a city of government buildings. The Capitol, both as a work of art and also by reason of patriotic sentiment, is the dominant building in the city. . . Inadvertently, certain things have been done which interfere with that dominance. For example, by gilding the dome of the Library of Congress, competition has

³⁴ *Minutes*, 8 March 1928, pp. 11–12.

been created between that dome and the dome of the Capitol. Again, the great and awkward bulk of the Post Office building, with its high tower, is assertive and disturbing. Third, the view from the Senate end of the Capitol is seriously interfered with by the vast bulk of the Government Printing Office. . .

While it is true that Government buildings are not subject to the regulations as to height imposed by the authority of the District of Columbia, yet those regulations were authorized by Congress for the express purpose of protecting Government buildings. The Government itself should not defy regulations imposed by its authority for its own protection. If the Government shall lead the way in the erection of high buildings, private individuals will go further, and the great charm and distinction of Washington will thus be destroyed. . .

Washington is now essentially an orderly city, and that very quality draws people of distinction and cultivation to the city. During the past ten years the type of business buildings in Washington has been brought to harmonize in large degree with the Government buildings, and the residential section of Washington has developed at an unprecedented rate. There should be no one center of interest in the city, but all parts of the District of Columbia should be developed as harmoniously as may be. Under our form of Government and with our traditions, it is difficult to restrain the individual for the good of the community, especially in matters of taste, but there is no reason why the Government itself should not exercise a self-restraint to accomplish a purpose entirely for its own benefit.³⁵

However, the Commission of Fine Arts did not feel bound by arbitrary rules in this sphere. In a letter to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1931 Charles Moore said, in reference to a project which had been submitted:

. . . The object in view was an esthetic one and in the decisions of the Commission the esthetic point of view will be observed as a primary consideration. If the general requirement in regard to zoning should be in conflict with the esthetic object, whether because the zoning regulations permit too high a building or require too low a building for good order and good looks, then the Commission of Fine Arts will not hesitate to advise accordingly. . .³⁶

The problem of the parked automobile in the monumental area of Washington has concerned the Commission of Fine Arts for many years. Only one of the many letters written in regard to this problem will be quoted here. It was written in 1931 to Senator Simeon D. Fess, Vice Chairman of the George Washington Bicentennial Commission, and signed by the entire Commission of Fine Arts:

³⁵ *Report of the Commission of Fine Arts, 1916*, pp. 24-27.

³⁶ *Minutes*, 17 December 1931, Exhibit K-1.

. . .Anticipating such an influx of visitors, and having in mind the duties of the National Commission of Fine Arts under the Resolution of Congress, this Commission respectfully suggest to the United States Bicentennial Commission the following considerations:

First. The City of Washington itself was originally laid out under the immediate direction of President Washington as a work of art the like of which did not then exist. For more than a century and a quarter the National Capital has progressed towards the ideals of its founders, until it has become by universal acknowledgment one of the finest cities in the world.

Second. The opening of the Arlington Memorial Bridge and Rock Creek Parkway and the Mount Vernon Highway will be extensions of the great central composition of Washington—a composition which for extent, dignity, grandeur and beauty never has been surpassed in the history of the world. Fine and extensive as are these vital elements, they are but steps in the march of progress towards higher things already outlined and in part provided for by Congress.

Third. Throughout the original City of Washington, situated between the Anacostia Branch and Rock Creek and extending from the Potomac to Florida Avenue, the streets and avenues, the parks and reservations, all belong to the people of the United States. These streets and open spaces were secured in order to insure both the convenience and the pleasure of the citizens of the entire country and their representatives engaged in carrying on the legislative and executive work of the Government.

Fourth. Today the purpose of the founders is thwarted; convenience is seriously impeded, and pleasure is destroyed by the permitted usurpation of streets, parks, parkways, and monument grounds by stationary automobiles. The millions and millions of dollars spent to express the gratitude of the Nation to those who have deserved well by the Republic have gone to waste because unworthy, undignified lines of cars either occupy or frame every park and reservation. The people of the United States are thus robbed of their heritage in their capital.

Fifth. With congestion of streets already established and saturation of parks complete, with the monuments to Washington and Lincoln defaced, with the very steps of the Capitol blocked by parked automobiles, with the artistic features of the city as planned by Washington and Jefferson brought to naught, the invitations extended to the citizens of the United States to visit their capital would seem but a mockery. They will not be able to find accommodation, let alone joy and pleasure.

Sixth. The sad experiences of congestion on the day of the burial of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington were regarded as a national disgrace. Yet those experiences were a matter of hours. Here we look forward to months of recurring like occasions.

Seventh. This Commission would not thus address you save for the fact that after the most diligent inquiry it has not been found that adequate or systematic steps are being taken by an authority to provide parking places for visiting automobiles.

This Commission finds schedules of pageants and celebrations to lure people to Washington, but absolutely no plans to provide accommodations for them when they come here.

Eighth. Congress by the Constitution has exclusive legislation over the District of Columbia. The Commission of Fine Arts is able to suggest only one way for preserving for the people of the United States the surpassing artistic features of the City of Washington both during the Bicentennial and thereafter. That way is by Congress to recover the parks for their use as parks, and to regulate the use of the streets and avenues for the benefit of all the people.³⁷

In the years following World War II the Commission of Fine Arts had to concern itself with problems almost unknown at the time of its creation, problems which arose as a result of the sharp increase in urban population and the rapid development of the suburbs. In Washington, as in other urban areas, increased transportation and housing requirements often resulted in the destruction of parklands, historic sites and buildings. Within the areas under its jurisdiction the Commission of Fine Arts has been particularly concerned with the adverse effect of freeways and other heavy traffic arteries on the dignity and serenity of the major monuments and their surroundings. In 1959 the Commission approved a resolution recommending an amendment to the Federal Highway Act of 1956. It said:

The Commission of Fine Arts recognizes that, while the standards and requirements of the Federal Highway Act of 1956 may be properly applicable to federally financed highways throughout the country, such standards, when applied within the metropolitan area of the city of Washington, are destructive of the L'Enfant, McMillan and other plans which have been responsible for the beauty of the city, especially as regards parks, public buildings and monuments. Such standards impose upon the city interchanges of such size and complexity as to threaten the preservation of park areas and the utilization of the land as intended by plans that have been long established. These requirements are also destructive of the scale of monumental buildings, such as the Lincoln Memorial and the proposed National Culture Center. These monumental buildings should not be subjected to competition from surrounding roadways and structures, which seriously effect their sites.

The Commission of Fine Arts therefore, recommends that the Department of Commerce amend the regulations and, if

³⁷ *Minutes*, 2 November 1931, Exhibit D.

necessary, seek legislation to amend the Federal Highway Act of 1956, so that the design criteria used in connection therewith will not be applied to the metropolitan area of the city of Washington.³⁸

Later, in 1962, the Commission wrote Secretary of Commerce Luther Hodges about this problem. The letter said, in part:

The members of the Commission of Fine Arts are concerned the Federal Highway program is still being carried out in such a way as to inflict unnecessary damage to architectural and historical monuments in the affected areas. . . Efforts are now being made, by means of legislation, to prepare lists of buildings, objects and areas that are important from an architectural or historic point of view. Even if such legislation is passed, it will take time to prepare such lists. There does exist, however, much information in the files of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and in the files of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Meanwhile, great damage is being done at places such as Sacramento and elsewhere.³⁹

Replies were received from both the Secretary of Commerce and the Federal Highway Administrator, Rex Whitton. Mr. Whitton stated:

As Secretary Luther H. Hodges wrote you on June 15, 1962, I have given serious consideration to your letter to him of May 23, 1962, and have decided as a first step to follow your suggestion and employ one or more experts having sufficient background and experience to be able to evaluate historical and archeological areas, and perhaps architectural values, which may be affected by the national highway program. . .⁴⁰

In 1966 the Federal Highway Act contained a section entitled "Protection of Parklands" which gave at least a measure of protection to both parklands and historic sites, although its provisions were not mandatory.

The Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission and the Government of the District of Columbia agreed in 1964 to jointly sponsor a Landmarks Committee which would prepare a list of District of Columbia buildings and sites which should be preserved. The Committee would then study existing zoning, licensing, tax and other legislation in an effort to find methods of saving these historic places without imposing an impossible financial burden on the owners. In 1968 the Mayor-Commissioner of the District of Colum-

³⁸ *Eighteenth Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1965, p. 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

bia Government designated the Joint Committee on Landmarks as the official state review board for the recommendation of landmarks to the National Register as required by the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Since that time the Committee has played an active role in enlarging the number of important historic structures listed in the National Capital and in defining and administering such historic districts as Logan Circle and the LeDroit Park areas of Washington.

Charles Moore

During the period in which most of the letters just quoted were written, the chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts was Charles Moore. He held this position from 1915–1937, an extraordinarily long time, and was intimately involved with the McMillan Commission as well as the Commission of Fine Arts.

Charles Moore (1855–1942) was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan. He graduated from Harvard in 1878, and while there developed an appreciation of art from his teacher, Charles Eliot Norton. At about that time Norton introduced at Harvard the first course in the history of art offered in the United States. Upon graduation Charles Moore entered the field of journalism and became a reporter for the *Detroit Evening Journal*. Around 1889 he was sent to Washington as a correspondent for Detroit newspapers, and it was in this capacity that he met Senator James McMillan of Michigan. In 1890 he became the Senator's political secretary, and when McMillan became chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, Charles Moore became its clerk. Through the efforts of Senator McMillan and the American Institute of Architects the Senate Park Commission was established to work out long-range plans for the development of Washington. Charles Moore became secretary of the Commission, accompanied its members to Europe and later edited the report submitted to the Senate.

With the publication of this report in 1902, the Senate Park Commission went out of existence. Senator McMillan died in the same year and Charles Moore returned to Detroit to become secretary of the Security Trust Company there. It was at this time that his friendship with Charles L. Freer developed. Freer was managing director of the Michigan Car Company and had acquired a notable collection of oriental art, numbering some 8,000 objects. Through Charles Moore's persuasion Mr. Freer donated his collection to the Smithsonian Institution, to be housed in its own building. This building, designed by Charles A. Platt, a member of the Commission of Fine Arts from

1916–1921, was the first building to be erected on the eastern portion of the Mall after the creation of the Commission of Fine Arts. It was opened to the public in 1923. One of the stipulations in Mr. Freer's will was that future objects of art acquired for the Gallery must have the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts. The Commission continues to fulfill this obligation.

Charles Moore was appointed to the original Commission of Fine Arts in 1910 and elected its chairman in 1915. He moved from Detroit to Washington as a permanent resident during World War I, and in addition to his duties as chairman of the Commission was also consultant to the Library of Congress and Acting Chief of the Division of Manuscripts. He held the latter position from 1918–1927, and among his notable achievements was the acquisition of the letters and papers of Presidents Roosevelt and Taft.

In addition to his many duties as a public servant and a member or officer of various civic and cultural organizations, Charles Moore found time to write a number of books and articles and to edit others. From his friendship with the members of the Senate Park Commission came two biographies: *Daniel H. Burnham* (1915) and the *Life and Letters of Charles Follen McKim* (1929). His interest in his nation's capital and its development produced *Washington Past and Present* (1929), a collection of personal memories and an interpretation of the twentieth century plans for Washington in light of the past. His long-standing interest in the life of George Washington resulted in his appointment as advisor in the publication of the thirty-seven volume work, *Writings of George Washington*, authorized by Congress to be published for the George Washington Bicentennial in 1932.

Charles Moore received numerous awards, medals and honorary degrees, including a Doctor of Arts degree from Harvard, his alma mater. In 1935, on the occasion of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Commission of Fine Arts, members and former members of the Commission presented Dr. Moore with a gold medal, designed by Lee Lawrie, then the sculptor member of the Commission. Eugene Savage, the painter member, executed a portrait of Mr. Moore which still hangs in the Commission's offices.

The Federal Triangle

Charles Moore's chairmanship of the Commission of Fine Arts spanned a period during which one of the major concerns of the Commission was the implementation of an enormous public building program. In fact, among the first submissions made to the Com-

mission in 1910 were the plans for new buildings for the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce and Labor (at that time one department). These were to be erected in the area bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, Fifteenth Street, Constitution Avenue and Fourteenth Street. Plans for these buildings were approved by the Commission, but appropriations were never made. Employees of these and other departments and agencies continued to work in cramped and scattered quarters which were often rented, rather than owned, by the Government.

The chaotic situation caused Congress to create a Public Buildings Commission in 1916 to study the problem. The Act creating this commission authorized the Commission of Fine Arts to make a report, which it did in 1917. However, no action was taken because of World War I.

In 1923 conditions were such that President Coolidge recommended to Congress that it authorize the erection of three or four of the most urgently needed buildings. In 1924 he asked the Commission of Fine Arts to submit to the Director of the Budget a record of existing legislation in regard to public buildings and also to suggest a tentative building program. In this report the Commission recommended a "deliberate, comprehensive, intelligent and permanent" plan in contrast to the hasty, piecemeal way of building previously followed.⁴¹ It also recommended that this building program be based on the principles of L'Enfant, the Plan of 1901, and the Public Buildings Report of 1917. It was suggested that the Government not try to erect all the buildings at once but instead plan a building program covering a decade or so.

In discussing the program with the Public Buildings Commission in June 1926, it was noted that while in 1910 there had been plans to place buildings for three departments in the block south of Pennsylvania Avenue between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets, these departments had now grown to the point where there was room for only one building on the site. It was suggested by the Commission of Fine Arts that the Commerce building be erected there, rather than on the Mall, as had been requested by the Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover. In December 1926 Charles Moore reported that he had attended a meeting of the Public Buildings Commission and that a site plan for the new buildings had been presented by Edward H. Bennett, who had been appointed special architectural consultant on the Public Buildings Program by the Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon. The buildings were to be located in the triangle south of Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the Treasury. Buildings to be included at this time were the departments of Justice, Com-

⁴¹ *Eleventh Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1930, p. 38.

merce, and Labor; the Internal Revenue Service, the General Accounting Office, a General Supply Building, an Independent Offices Building and the National Archives. The State Department was to be located in the Square west of Lafayette Park. Some changes in the agencies to be accommodated in the Triangle were made later, as the plan developed.⁴² The Commission of Fine Arts approved the plans in general and recommended that Congress be asked to purchase the whole area, at a cost of twenty-five million dollars.

After further consideration of the scheme the Commission decided that it favored a different approach from that presented by Mr. Bennett. The members preferred a plan based on the Louvre-Tuileries complex in Paris, with colonnades, open courts and arched driveways to carry traffic through the buildings. This use of passageways, particularly in the Commerce Building, would permit some east-west streets to be disregarded as open streets and would allow extended facades for units of a very large building rather than the use of smaller, individual units separated by streets. A letter was sent to the Secretary of the Treasury in April 1927 recommending these changes. At the May meeting it was reported that the Secretary had directed his architectural consultants to restudy the Triangle project with a view to giving it a treatment similar to the Louvre, as had been recommended by the Commission of Fine Arts.

In September 1927 the Commission listened to a report by William Adams Delano, a member who was also on the board of architectural consultants for the Triangle project. He said that after many revisions the consultants had arrived at a new general scheme for the Triangle. The plan showed that a number of small buildings had been combined into several of large size, broken up by passageways and courtyards, following the suggestions of the Commission of Fine Arts. While elements of the plan did resemble the Louvre-Tuileries complex, the size of the whole was considerably larger. The Louvre grouping is somewhat over two thousand feet on its longest side; the Federal Triangle is close to four thousand feet along Constitution Avenue and longer than that on Pennsylvania Avenue. The Louvre comprises about forty-eight acres, the Federal Triangle seventy.

In discussing the interior courts, Delano noted that it was the hope of the architectural consultants that the main entrances to the buildings would be from the courtyards "so that a sense of quiet will pervade the scheme."⁴³ There was a lengthy discussion of these court-

⁴² When completed the Triangle housed the following departments and agencies: Departments of Commerce, Labor, Post Office, and Justice; the Internal Revenue Service, the Interstate Commerce and Federal Trade Commissions, and the National Archives. The Customs Service now occupies what was formerly the Department of Labor Building.

⁴³ *Minutes*, 28 Sept., 1927, p. 3.

yards and the vistas which might be opened or closed if certain changes were made. It was also observed at this time that individually the buildings seemed to lack character.

Some of the problems of designing one of these large structures, not to mention trying to coordinate the whole project, were expressed by Louis Ayres of the firm of York and Sawyer, when he discussed the design of the Commerce building before the Commission:

In explaining our scheme of design as a whole, the following considerations were taken into account.

First, that the buildings should be monumental in general character showing a classical influence consistent with the general development of the Governmental Architecture of Washington. This seemed to fix the possibility of height as five visible stories . . . and one set-back behind the crowning balustrade. This meant, to produce a million net square feet of office space on the site designated, a cellular plan and a well-lighted and flexible one without the use of heavy architectural motives. Our plan as developed has six interior courts but wide enough, approximately one hundred feet, to be well lighted and airy. We succeeded in convincing the officials concerned that as over sixty per cent of the office space faced on these courts they should be kept clear of all structures (such as garages which they had contemplated) and be planted, have fountains, etc., in fact be pleasant and quiet and cool as the parks on which the exterior walls will face. . .

As to the exterior, the problem of light and flexibility called for a rather uniform and close spacing of windows so that columns seemed the proper vehicle for accents where needed.

The 15th Street facade was felt to have no center or any necessity for great sub-division, as it is faced by the continuous heavy planting of the White House lot and will be seen in sharp perspective, in fact probably the entire facade (of one thousand thirty seven feet) can never be seen at one time. We therefore tried, we think successfully, to form an interesting composition about the entrances, using in each case the three large arches of the driveway court as a central motive. This and a variety of wall treatment using columns only on the pavilions over the entrances and bringing forward the wall in the center of the building, to prevent a concave appearance in sharp perspective, give, we feel, sufficient interest. . .

. . . We tried not to use too many columns but only to form accents where we felt accent was needed.

Mr. Ayres' presentation was followed by a discussion with the members of the Commission, part of which is quoted here:

Mr. Garfield thereupon raised the question whether anyone ever made a careful study of the question of omitting columns in the proposed buildings. He said it is generally admitted

among architects that they are not a necessity to buildings but no one has succeeded in discarding them. Mr. Delano said that the Board of Architectural Consultants had considered this carefully but felt the columns were needed to break the monotony of the facade; that they might be omitted from a modern office building, but have their place in a monumental departmental building. Mr. Ayres said that is why they introduced them in the design for the Department of Commerce Building. The columns (24 of them) are 42 feet high; those of the colonnade of the Lincoln Memorial are 44 feet high. . . .

Mr. Morris felt some sort of central feature is needed for the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the Triangle. Mr. Delano pointed out certain particulars in the Plan; he said the Board proposes quite an important entrance to the Triangle on the Pennsylvania Avenue side. The secretary called attention to the fact that for possibly several years to come the existing Post Office building, the Southern Railway Building and the Municipal Building will prevent construction of new buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue between 11th and 12th, and between 13th and 14th Streets. . . .⁴⁴

Undoubtedly no one at that meeting even suspected that because of these buildings the Triangle would still be incomplete in 1976. After this discussion, the Commission approved the plans for the Commerce Building, and later in the day, those for the Internal Revenue Service.

It was May 1929 before another serious discussion of the Triangle took place. At this meeting the Commission members discussed a model they had seen the previous month. There were misgivings and many specific criticisms. Benjamin W. Morris, an architect member, felt that the model was done "in commission form." He said:

. . . It is one big composition, representing the work of a group of people and anything of that kind that a Commission or group of people will do will be to a certain extent a compromise. If I had the say, I would suggest that what has been accomplished at the present time be turned over to one very able designer with a view that constructive criticism and suggestions from one person might result in a unification of the whole composition; if this could be accomplished, I believe it would be highly beneficial to the artistic quality of the whole work.⁴⁵

The Commission felt there was no question but that the matter must be taken in hand and rectified. The strongest criticisms were directed at the design of the Justice Department and the large pediment on the facade of the Labor Department. Smaller details were also criticized, especially the use of too many columns and pilasters in some

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁵ *Minutes*, 28 May 1929, p. 8.

places while there were none in others. It was also thought that the District Building at Fourteenth and E Streets would have to be worked into the scheme as Congress would never consent to tearing it down.

The design of the Justice Department continued to disturb the Commission for a period of many months. At this time it was sited where the National Archives now stands, between Seventh and Ninth Streets. To introduce some variety into the scheme and to emphasize the cross axis of the Mall at Seventh Street (a feature of the Plan of 1901) the building had been designed so that the Mall facade defined a great semi-circular plaza. This plaza was to contain a fountain, and there were to be pools facing it across Constitution Avenue on the Mall. This design, in spite of its merits in regard to the Mall cross axis, introduced problems as it was difficult to integrate with the other elements in the plan. Also, its diagonal facade on Pennsylvania Avenue caused difficulties in relation to the rectangular form of the old Patent Office building at the north end of the cross axis.

In a meeting with the board of architectural consultants in September 1929, Edward H. Bennett, the chairman, said that the Secretary of the Treasury wanted the Triangle plan to be as varied and as interesting as possible. In regard to the model presented earlier in the year, he admitted that it had been regarded by critics "as being monotonous, because of the sameness of style of buildings and the great area from the Capitol to the Treasury Building that they will occupy." He added: ". . .for this reason circles, plazas, domes and pediments have been introduced into the scheme, but it appears that the adjustment of these motives in the Triangle Plan is presenting real difficulties. . ."⁴⁶

The Commission of Fine Arts asked to consider the matter and worked out some suggestions which included a simplified plan for the Great Plaza across from the Commerce building at Fourteenth Street, the restudying of the Pennsylvania Avenue facade of the Justice Department and of the fountain in the Mall facade plaza, and a recommendation that John Russell Pope study the Archives building. The Commission felt that the height necessary for this building made it a disturbing element in the plan. (It was then located between Ninth and Eleventh Streets.)

In February 1930 Pope showed the Commission of Fine Arts and the Board of Architectural Consultants tentative designs for an Archives building; one was for the original site and the other for the site intended for the Justice Department. Both designs were favorably received, and the site change considered. Charles Moore commented that any building erected on the Seventh to Ninth Street site would have to recognize the cross axis of the Mall. William Zantzinger,

⁴⁶ *Minutes*, 11 September 1929, p. 18.

who at the time was trying to design the Justice Department for that site, wondered if this could be done if a diagonal facade along Pennsylvania Avenue were retained.

In May 1930 the Commission inspected a revised model showing the Archives building between Seventh and Ninth and the Justice Department between Ninth and Eleventh Streets. The Commission approved the switch in sites, and approximately a year later it approved Pope's design for the Archives building. In his design Pope abandoned both a curved facade on the Mall and the diagonal facade on Pennsylvania Avenue, making his building basically a rectangle.

While plans for the Triangle were being discussed, the two buildings which had been approved, the Commerce building and the Internal Revenue Service building, were under construction. In May 1930 the Commission of Fine Arts inspected the Internal Revenue Service building which had been completed eighteen months ahead of schedule.

The building at the apex of the Triangle between Sixth and Seventh Streets was included in and removed from the plan several times. Opinion was divided as to the merit of a building at this site from a design point of view. Lack of funds because of the Depression was also a factor in the indecision. Gilmore Clarke, the landscape architect member of the Commission, did not want to see a building on this site. His arguments were that the Archives building served as a fitting end to the Triangle with only a small mass (a fountain or monument) needed at the end; more office space here would only bring more traffic, and this was a problem which had not received sufficient consideration in planning the Triangle; there was a great need for more open space in this part of the city; and, finally, the site was not an economical one for a building because it was too narrow. John Russell Pope, the architect of the Archives building, argued differently. He



Sculpture studio of Edgar Walter, showing model for pediment sculpture, Departmental Auditorium, Department of Labor-Interstate Commerce Building. Photograph by Gabriel Moulin, San Francisco.

felt that the Apex building, as it was called, was needed to frame the Archives building and to bring the composition to a fitting terminus. Pope's view and the fact that the Federal Trade Commission was urgently in need of space finally persuaded the Government to appropriate funds for the building. The design was approved by the Commission of Fine Arts in May 1936. The building was erected in a remarkably short time—one year and one day from empty site to finished exterior, with occupancy following three months later.

One aspect of the Federal Triangle development which should be mentioned here is the lavish use of sculpture and murals in these buildings. The Commission of Fine Arts paid close attention to these designs and regarded the use of the allied arts as vital to the architecture of the new public buildings. In 1931 a letter was written to the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury stating Commission policy in this matter. The letter said, in part:

. . . The Commission believe that in all public buildings a sum should be set aside at the beginning for both mural paintings and sculpture as essential parts of the building and not merely as applied decorations. This the Commission regard as part of the architect's plans to be considered from the very beginning of the building and to be carried out along with the construction. The pediments of the new Commerce Building are instances of a capable method of selecting artists to carry out the work.

The Commission of Fine Arts regard the subject of decorations of public buildings by sculpture and painting of so much importance that they consider it a duty to impress upon all persons in authority in construction of public buildings the vital necessity of making painting and sculpture constituent parts of the building and to that end the Commission is ready to give in all cases detailed consideration to all designs during the presentations of plans for new public buildings.⁴⁷

An element in the Triangle development which plagued the architects and the Commission for many years was the Great Plaza, the large area opening off Fourteenth Street and enclosed by the District Building on the north, the Old Labor Department and Interstate Commerce Commission on the south and the Post Office Department on the east. This was to be a major landscaped area, offering the thousands of government workers employed in the Triangle a cool, green space in which to relax. The Plaza, 850 feet long and 500 feet wide, is about the size of Lafayette Square. Plans for this area changed over the years, generally in the direction of simplicity, either because of the

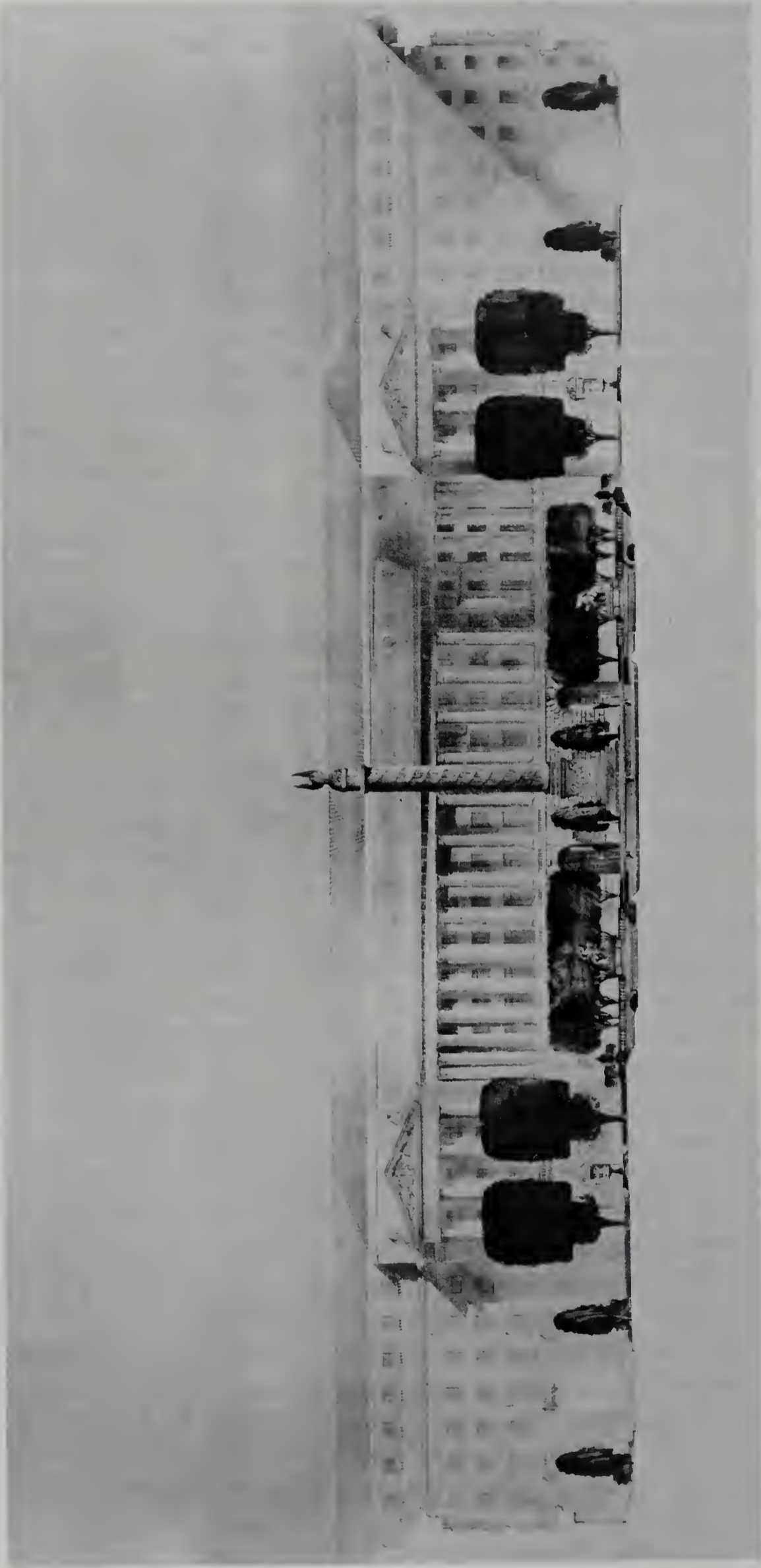
⁴⁷ *Minutes*, 1 July 1931, Exhibit G. In 1961 the Commission was deploring the dearth of painting and sculpture in public buildings built since World War II. See *Eighteenth Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1965, p. 9.

recommendations of the Commission of Fine Arts or because of lack of funds. Basically, the scheme was formal and architectural, consisting originally of a long rectangular pool in the center, surrounded by a paved walk, grass terraces and rows of trees, with a sculptural element (either a column or a fountain) in the hemicycle at the east end.

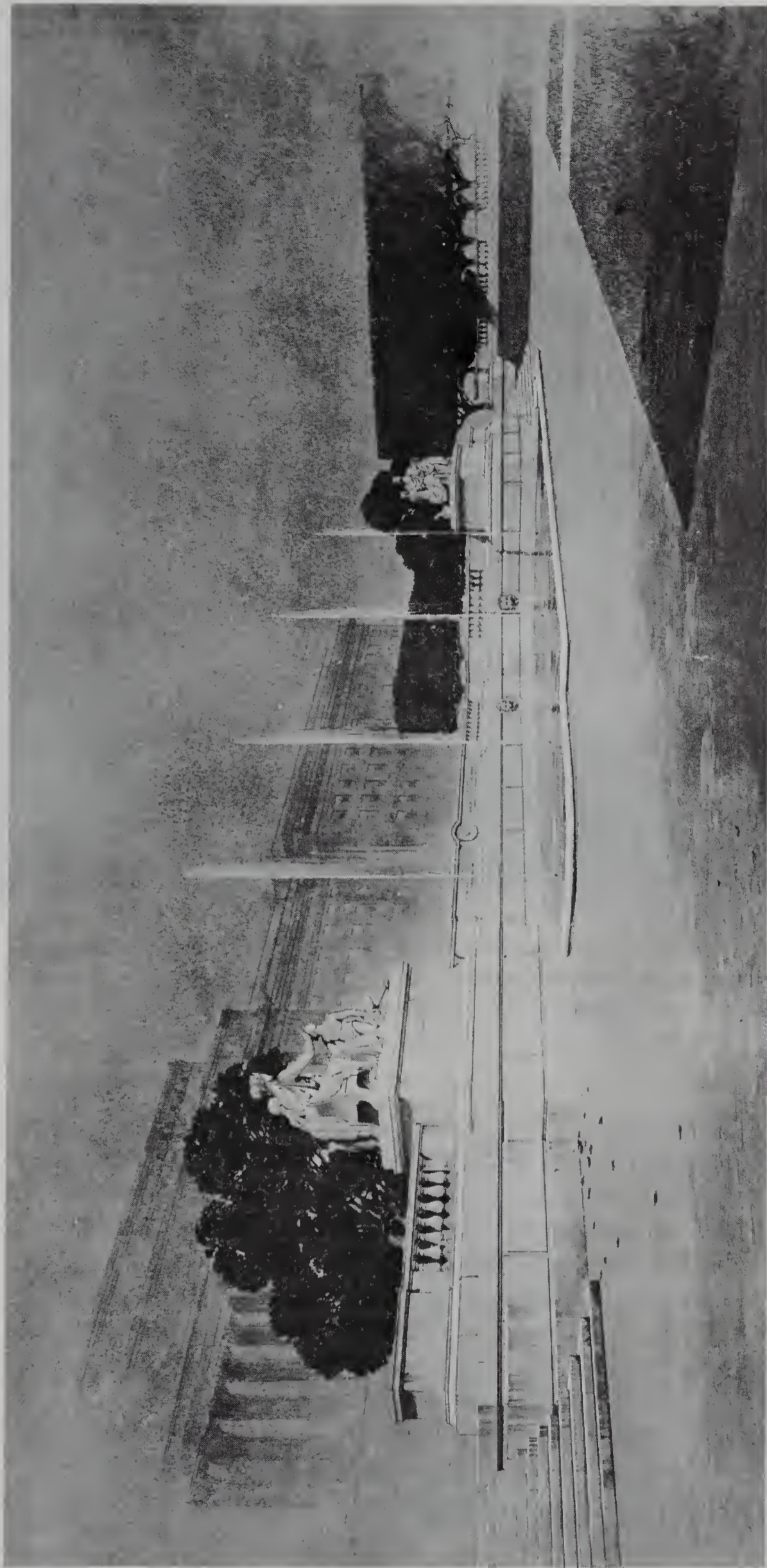
At the western end of the Plaza opposite the Department of Commerce was to be a memorial fountain dedicated to Oscar Straus, former Secretary of Commerce. Designed originally by John Russell Pope with sculpture by Adolph A. Weinman, the memorial underwent many changes in design after Pope's death in 1937. These changes were based on the fact that as years went by, the designers had to consider the possibility that the Great Plaza itself might never be completed in the way originally envisioned. Economic factors also played a role in changing the design, as they had in the development of Columbia Island. More and more, beginning with the Depression years, the *Minutes* of the Commission of Fine Arts bear witness to the fact that sculptural adornment for buildings and open spaces was becoming prohibitively expensive. The Straus memorial was completed, however, and dedicated in 1947.

It was the only element that was completed. The rest of the Plaza became less and less grand in concept as the years went by. The Commission of Fine Arts felt from the beginning that the plans were too monumental and formal. In November 1933 the members asked for a new study of the area and in particular recommended the elimination of the pool and the substitution of a grass panel. In 1936 new studies were still being submitted. In May of that year landscape architects Simon and Geiffert presented another, less expensive plan. By this time much of the Triangle had been completed and the Great Plaza had become a parking lot. The Commission of Fine Arts had been lamenting this fact for several years, and when Mr. Simon presented his plan he said: "The longer this place is left as an automobile park, the more difficult it is going to be to change its character."⁴⁸ His words were prophetic. An underground parking garage proved to be too expensive; and despite repeated recommendations by the Commission of Fine Arts to the Treasury Department and the Public Buildings Committee that the cars be removed and the work on the Plaza expedited, nothing was done. In November 1937 the National Capital Park and Planning Commission was suggesting that the plans could be altered so as to include permanent parking for 350 cars. The Commission of Fine Arts was opposed to this and convinced the Planning Commission and the Treasury Department that cars did not belong in the Great Plaza. However, in January 1938 Gilmore

⁴⁸ *Minutes*, 1 May 1936, p. 15.



Design for the east end of the Great Plaza.



Early design (1931) by John Russell Pope for the Straus Memorial at the west end of the Great Plaza.



The Federal Triangle, partially completed (c. 1934), showing the Great Plaza (left) already filled with cars. In the center of the photograph behind the Triangle buildings is the old Post Office, originally scheduled for demolition but now to be retained as part of the Pennsylvania Avenue Plan. Photograph by Commercial Photo Company.

Clarke, then chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, was suggesting a change in plans which would allow a very limited number of cars to park on the drive around the perimeter of the Plaza.

Even with this concession, the development never took place. World War II put an end to the issue for awhile, and it was not brought up before the Commission again until 1948. By this time eliminating the cars altogether seemed hopeless. In January the Commission discussed the "rehabilitation" of the Plaza with W. E. Reynolds, Commissioner of Public Buildings, who said that at the time about 1,100 cars were parked in the Plaza, that it was the only area in the Triangle which could be used for parking, and that it would be very difficult to develop any other parking in the area without going onto the Mall. Then Gilmore Clarke said:

I feel, as far as speaking for this Commission, that we would rather have a park area there than anything else, a place where the employees can go out in the middle of the day and have a place for recreation. But, on the other hand, we cannot ignore the practical factors of the parking of cars. Unfortunately, it has gotten off to a precedent where they park 1,000 or 1,100 cars there, and it is hard to break that...⁴⁹

He suggested studying a depressed central area for cars with trees around the edge and in the parking space. The trees would, hopefully, form a canopy over the whole area.

A report asking that a study be made along the lines suggested was sent to Mr. Reynolds. In May, a design which provided for parking close to 1,000 cars was approved by the Commission.

In November 1953 the subject came up again. This time it was David Finley, now chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, who discussed the matter with Harry Thompson of National Capital Parks. Mr. Finley was trying to find out what was holding up the development of the Plaza, and the answer was that while National Capital Parks would like to see the area developed as a park, there was just no place to put the cars, an underground garage being too expensive because of soil conditions. The subject was brought up again in 1955 with the National Capital Planning Commission. In 1956 the Commission of Fine Arts agreed to additional parking facilities in the hemicycle facing the Great Plaza and in the Twelfth Street court of the Post Office Department building, providing the General Services Administration would remove the parking concession in the Plaza itself. In September of that year the Commission registered its disappointment that nothing had been done. In January 1959 the General Services Administration requested Commission approval for repaving the Great Plaza for continued use as a parking lot. The Commission refused and urged that the land be transferred to the Interior Department for use as a park. At this time also the Post Office Department asked to use its south interior court for parking. The answer was no, unless the Department could remove its cars from the Great Plaza.

In November 1960 the Commission wrote to outgoing President Eisenhower expressing the hope that two projects could be started before the end of his administration: the removal of a temporary World War II building on the Washington Monument grounds and the development of the Great Plaza. The letter stated:

...This plaza, which is surrounded by the handsome government buildings of the Federal Triangle, was intended to be a park but is now, after thirty years, in use as a commercial parking lot, leased by the General Services Administration to a parking agency in Washington. It contains a fountain to

⁴⁹ *Minutes*, 14 January 1948, p. 4.

the memory of former Secretary of Commerce Mr. Oscar Straus, but is otherwise unimproved. It is on the ceremonial route by which distinguished foreign visitors to Washington pass on the way to the White House from the airport. The lease above referred to can be terminated, we understand, on short notice by the Administrator of General Services, and the park can be assigned to the National Park Service in the Department of the Interior for development at comparatively small expense.⁵⁰

The request brought no action. During President Kennedy's administration his Council on Pennsylvania Avenue again recommended the landscaping of the Great Plaza. In 1970 the plans were reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts. Nothing was done and the Plaza remains a parking lot to this day. The Triangle itself has never been completed. The Old Post Office building remains, leaving uncompleted the second largest open space planned for the project: the circular plaza to the east of the Post Office Department. The District Building and the one which until recently stood to the east of it were also to have been replaced. Thus it is difficult to pass judgment on the Triangle development as a whole. Often criticized for its monotony and its inhuman scale, these faults would have at least been lessened if its great interior spaces had been landscaped as originally intended.

The National Gallery of Art

John Russell Pope, the great Beaux Arts architect who was a member of the Commission of Fine Arts from 1917–1922, was responsible for many fine residences and public buildings in the city of Washington. Shortly before his death in 1937 he designed two of the best known structures in the Capital: the National Gallery of Art and the Jefferson Memorial.

Plans for a National Gallery of Art had been considered by the Commission of Fine Arts in 1924. The architect was Charles A. Platt, a former Commission member who had just designed the Freer Gallery of Art. The site for the building at that time was on the Mall, as it is now, but farther west—between Seventh and Ninth Streets, adjacent to the Museum of Natural History. The design by Platt was predicated on the permanent closing of Ninth Street across the Mall, and the Commission was reluctant to approve it as the Plan of 1901 had called for this street to cross the Mall. In 1926 the Commission suggested that a better site would be between Four and One-half and Sixth Streets adjacent to the Mall with a frontage on Pennsylvania

⁵⁰ *Minutes*, 15 November 1960, Exhibit G.



South Elevation
The NATIONAL GALLERY of ART
Preliminary Study
1924

Charles Platt's design for the National Gallery of Art, 1924.



John Russell Pope's design for the National Gallery of Art, Mall facade, 1937.

Avenue. Later the site was moved to the west of the Museum of Natural History, between Twelfth and Fourteenth Streets, where the Museum of History and Technology is now. The present site was finally decided upon in 1936. By this time there was a private donor, former Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew W. Mellon, and John Russell Pope had been selected as the architect.

As the design progressed the Commission of Fine Arts developed reservations—about the fact that there was no monumental staircase inside the Constitution Avenue entrance, and particularly about the use of a central dome on the building. The members thought that this dome plus the one on the Museum of Natural History would set a precedent, and that every architect who subsequently designed a building for the Mall would want to use one. They feared a row of domes much as they had feared a row of obelisks back in 1911 when the suggestion was made that Lincoln's memorial take the same form as Washington's. However, Pope was insistent, arguing that a precedent would not be set and illustrating his point with the Freer

Gallery, a recent building on the Mall without a dome. Nevertheless, he presented a new design to the Commission. The Commission preferred this scheme; but Pope did not and neither did the donor, former Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon. After much discussion the Commission approved the original version in June 1937. John Russell Pope died two months later, on 27 August 1937, and Andrew Mellon the same day.

A history of the planning and construction of the Gallery, *A Standard of Excellence—Andrew W. Mellon Founds the National Gallery of Art at Washington, D.C.* (Smithsonian Press, 1973), has been written by David E. Finley, a former director of the Gallery and chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, 1950–1963.

The Jefferson Memorial

Pope's design for the Jefferson Memorial was never approved by the Commission of Fine Arts. As with all other major memorials, there were differing opinions as to both site and design.

The Commission of Fine Arts was first asked for an opinion on a site for a memorial to Thomas Jefferson in 1914. At that time two suggestions were made: a site between the Union Station Plaza and the Capitol, or one close to the proposed new State Department building, since Jefferson was the first Secretary of State. The matter did not come before the Commission again until January 1934, when the members replied to a letter from President Roosevelt asking them to study the possibility of locating a statute of Jefferson at the apex of the Federal Triangle, to the east of the Archives Building. At this time the Commission felt that this would be a possibility since there would be space for such a statue even if the Apex building were built. A suggestion was also made that the statue be placed on the cross axis of the Mall at Seventh Street, which would give it a major location in the plan of Washington. A third site mentioned was one in front of the Archives building on Pennsylvania Avenue. At this point the thought was that the memorial would take the form of a statue, and the sites mentioned were all relatively restricted ones.

In March 1934 another site was mentioned: the one south of the Washington Monument which in the Plan of 1901 was to be dedicated to the Founding Fathers. If this site were chosen the Commission of Fine Arts assumed that the Jefferson Memorial would be only one of several memorials erected there.

This site had been suggested previously (in the 1920's) as a location for a memorial to Theodore Roosevelt, and there had even been a competition for the design. Drawings were submitted by some of the most prestigious architectural firms in the country, including John Russell Pope, Delano and Aldrich, Charles A. Platt and McKim,

Mead & White. Pope won the competition, but the project was abandoned and nothing done until much later when the memorial on what is now Theodore Roosevelt Island was completed in the 1960's.

In June 1934 the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission was created; in April 1935 Charles Moore sent a memo to the Memorial Commission in which he emphasized the importance of choosing the right site. He said that it needed a certain degree of isolation and should be vitally related to the plan of Washington. He pointed out the fact that there were very few sites in the city with these attributes and stressed the importance of serious study, both in regard to the site and the character of the memorial.

The Commission of Fine Arts liked the site south of the Washington Monument but was concerned about the expense involved in developing it properly since costly foundation work would be necessary.

In 1923, when the site was being considered for the Roosevelt Memorial, Frederick Law Olmsted had written a letter regarding the problems of placing any kind of major memorial on it. This was read to the Commission of Fine Arts, and said, in part:

This portion of the plan of 1901 was less carefully studied than any other major part of the "Mall area", but it embodies certain elements which any revision or substitute plan cannot properly depart from, namely:

There should be a recognition and expression of the White House axis extending as an open vista without interruption or obstruction past the Washington Monument to a focus at or near the point where it is intersected by the line of Maryland Avenue forming a diagonal vista to the Capitol.

The fact that the floor of this vista is now occupied by a railroad does not alter the fact that it is one of the big elements in the original L'Enfant Plan. But it is reasonable that the Commission of Fine Arts should now review, with more thorough study than the Commission of 1901 was able to give it in the time at its disposal, the question of whether it is or is not best that the southern monumental focus of the White House axis should be placed on the Maryland Avenue axis, or should be deliberately placed off that axis on the theory that the permanent location of the railroad at a level high enough to pass over the marginal street of the Washington Channel makes it impracticable ever to develop a satisfactory treatment of the floor of a vista on Maryland Avenue between a focal monument of the White House axis and the dome of the Capitol; and therefore makes it undesirable to locate the focal monument in such a way as to invite attention to a vista thus condemned to imperfection and anticlimax.

It must not be forgotten that when the members of the Commission of 1901, almost at the last moment, agreed on the tentative plan for the southern area, the present railroad de-

velopment did not exist; and also it must not be overlooked that since this is the only railroad outlet through Washington to the South it is not at all inconceivable that it may have to be widened and elaborated to carry a vastly greater traffic than at present. . .

There is another rather fundamental question of design in regard to the treatment of the southern area on the White House axis which was never discussed by the Commission of 1901, and which forced itself on my thoughts when I took the matter up afresh this week.

Standing on the southern shore of Twining Lake ⁵¹ and looking north one can see the White House flag pole over the trees. It is flanked on the left by the brutal big mass of the State, War and Navy building soaring above the trees and is backed up by ragged high buildings, probably apartment houses, on 16th Street. From that distance and with such a setting and background the White House will be very insignificant in scale. The dome of the Capitol, the Washington Monument, and the colossal order of the Lincoln Memorial are in scale as vista-points with the proportions of the vistas. The White House considered as a point from which to look out upon a vista that loses itself in the broad distance of the Potomac (or would if it were not for the abominable big steel girders of the railroad bridge) is delightful and appropriate in its domestic scale. But considered as a "reciprocal" vista-point attempting to hold its own at the northern end of a vista over a mile long which terminates at the south in a memorial structure of a scale fitting to become coordinate with the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, I fear it would seem very inadequate and disappointing.

I feel more and more inclined to believe that no dominating central object at all in the scale of the Lincoln Memorial or in the scale adjusted primarily to the length of the vista ought ever to be erected on the southern axis of the White House, but rather that any objects on that axis should be minor incidents in scale with their local surroundings. In other words, that the treatment of the White House axis should be that of a succession of landscape units of moderate scale, strung beads on a string, each having objects in scale with the unit in which they find themselves rather than in scale with a single great simple unit such the one from 17th Street to the Lincoln Memorial and the one from the Washington Monument to Union Square.

The Monument Garden, which is a unit common to both axes, was in fact so designed that the scale of objects in its central open space would make it appropriate as an element in the two axes, one characterized by large units and a large scale and the other by smaller units and a smaller scale. But the more I think of it the more I am inclined to feel that in the treatment of the unit south of the Monument garden the scale of the objects should step down again rather than step up.

⁵¹ Twining Lake is now the Tidal Basin.



Early model for Pope's Jefferson Memorial showing redesigned Tidal Basin.

If I am right this points more than ever toward the idea of a group or series of relatively minor memorials in this unit and suggests that the focus be marked not by a monumental mass of importance, intended to count as a dominant object from a mile away, but by a local incident like a basin or a fountain or a flagpole. . .⁵²

The same problems were in the minds of the Commission members as they considered the site again as a location for the Jefferson Memorial. By this time it was also known that for engineering reasons the Washington Monument grounds would not be developed in the monumental form shown on the Plan of 1901. This was another factor to consider in relation to the development of the area south of the Monument. Again, at a joint meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in March 1937, Olmsted's views were quoted, this time from a report he had written on the site in 1935. He felt strongly at this time that if the Monument grounds were not to be developed in a monumental fashion the area to the south could not be, either.

The design which both commissions saw at this meeting two years after Olmsted's report was definitely monumental. It was by John Russell Pope, who had been selected as the architect by the Jefferson Memorial Commission. The memorial itself, in this original presentation, was very much like the one finally built, although larger. The Tidal Basin was divided into a number of pools, including one very large one of almost square proportions to the north of the memorial. Rectangular terraces surrounded the main structure, and formal rows of trees outlined the pools.

The Commission of Fine Arts was not happy with what it saw. Gilmore Clarke regretted that the design had reached the Commission in such a "frozen" state. He had hoped that the design would be

⁵² *Minutes*, 15 November 1923, Exhibit E.

open to competition and that it would be the result of the collaboration of an architect, landscape architect, engineer and sculptor. He had hoped also that it would "bring out some of the new arts rather than transporting an ancient parti⁵³ from Rome to this site in the form of the Pantheon."⁵⁴ William F. Lamb, an architect member of the Commission whose firm designed the Empire State Building in New York City, had this to say: "I myself do not believe that the reproduction of Imperial Rome in the shape of the Pantheon would represent in the slightest degree that simplicity, honesty of character that he [Jefferson] stood for. I think this is purely academic, without expression. . . ." Charles Moore said that he presumed Jefferson's love of classical architecture and his use of a similar form at Monticello had influenced the Jefferson Memorial Commission in its approval of this design. However, he was disturbed about the size and monumentality of Pope's version and felt that ". . . something quieter, more in keeping with Monticello and having somewhat the feeling that the White House has, which is a white spot among trees . . . is really what is wanted. . . ." ⁵⁵ Charles L. Borie, Jr., an architect member of the Commission, said: ". . . It is too much architecture. . . Mr. Manship's remark was to the effect that there were other forms of memorial that were not of the mausoleum type, but open to the sky and sunlight—something that has more sculpture than architecture, primarily." ⁵⁶ Eugene Savage, the painter member of the Commission, said: "I feel that it is rather a dreary thing as it stands. . . I regret that this has not been exposed to the full possibility of American design today." ⁵⁷

At this meeting both Commissions also expressed concern over unknown engineering costs which might be involved in developing the site; problems with traffic coming over the nearby bridge from Virginia which might arise as a result of the intended change in street pattern; and the effect that the radical changes in the shape of the Tidal Basin would have on its function of flushing the Washington Channel. Also, there was another fact to consider: if the memorial were built as planned, virtually all the cherry trees in the area and approximately eighty fine elm trees would have to be destroyed.

In June 1937 the Commission of Fine Arts concurred in a report sent by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to the

⁵³ An architectural term meaning the general scheme of a design, particularly in plan.

⁵⁴ *Minutes*, 20 March 1937, p. 22 of the record of the discussion of the joint meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31. The reference to Mr. Manship is to Paul Manship, sculptor member of the Commission.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Jefferson Memorial Commission recommending a more informal treatment of the site, especially because the Washington Monument would not be receiving the elaborate treatment planned in 1901. The feeling was that this memorial must be kept in proportion to the White House and the Washington Monument and must not overshadow the great east-west axis. Also, there was mention of the fact that the public liked the cherry trees and Tidal Basin the way they were.

In September 1937, shortly after Pope's death, the Commission of Fine Arts looked at a revised design for the Jefferson Memorial prepared by the firm of Eggers and Higgins, his successors. It was now located six hundred feet further south, on the axis of Sixteenth Street; the Tidal Basin was not radically altered and most of the cherry trees were left intact. The building itself was lower and considerably reduced in size. The Commission members considered the scheme vastly improved, but still did not like the Pantheon form. They called the attention of the architects to Pope's winning design for the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, which was an open peristyle type designed for the same site, and suggested something along those lines.

In February 1938 the architects presented three schemes. The Commission approved the open peristyle design, and although the Jefferson Memorial Commission still preferred the Pantheon approach it agreed to ask the architects to develop the open scheme. Then Pope's widow stated that she would not allow his design for the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial to be adapted for use as a memorial to Jefferson. At this point, the Memorial Commission switched back to the Pantheon proposal and secured President Roosevelt's approval for it. Relations between the Commission of Fine Arts and the Memorial Commission became strained; there were misunderstandings and misinterpretations, and in February 1939 the Commission of Fine Arts issued a report, addressed to Congress and giving its version of the situation, which was entitled *Report to the Senate and the House of Representatives Concerning the Jefferson Memorial*.

The Memorial Commission went ahead with the construction of the monument, and during 1940–1941 the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and approved plans for the plantings and roadways around it. The statue of Jefferson inside the memorial was never approved by the Commission.

What comes through very clearly in the discussions about the Jefferson Memorial is the attitude of the Commission at this time towards strict classicism in architecture and particularly towards Pope's current work. A decade earlier Pope was held in the highest esteem. When the 1929 model for the Federal Triangle turned out to be such a disappointment, Charles Moore suggested that the Triangle development be placed in the hands of an architect "like John Russell Pope."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *Minutes*, 28 May 1929, p. 9.

His design for the Archives building was approved almost without discussion in 1931. By 1937, however, such words as “academic”, “dreary” and “pompous” were being used to describe his Jefferson Memorial. While the Commission of Fine Arts continued to prefer the classical style for Washington buildings, it was moving away from approval of classicism in the academic sense, with its archeologically correct columns, pilasters and pediments, and towards an architecture more in touch with the present which would, however, retain the classic spirit—the serenity and stateliness which characterized the Washington of the McMillan Commission. Perhaps in the case of the Jefferson Memorial the criticism was due chiefly to the fact that this building was not one of Pope’s best; in any event, it was the last of the great Beaux Arts monuments in Washington.

The Shipstead-Luce Act

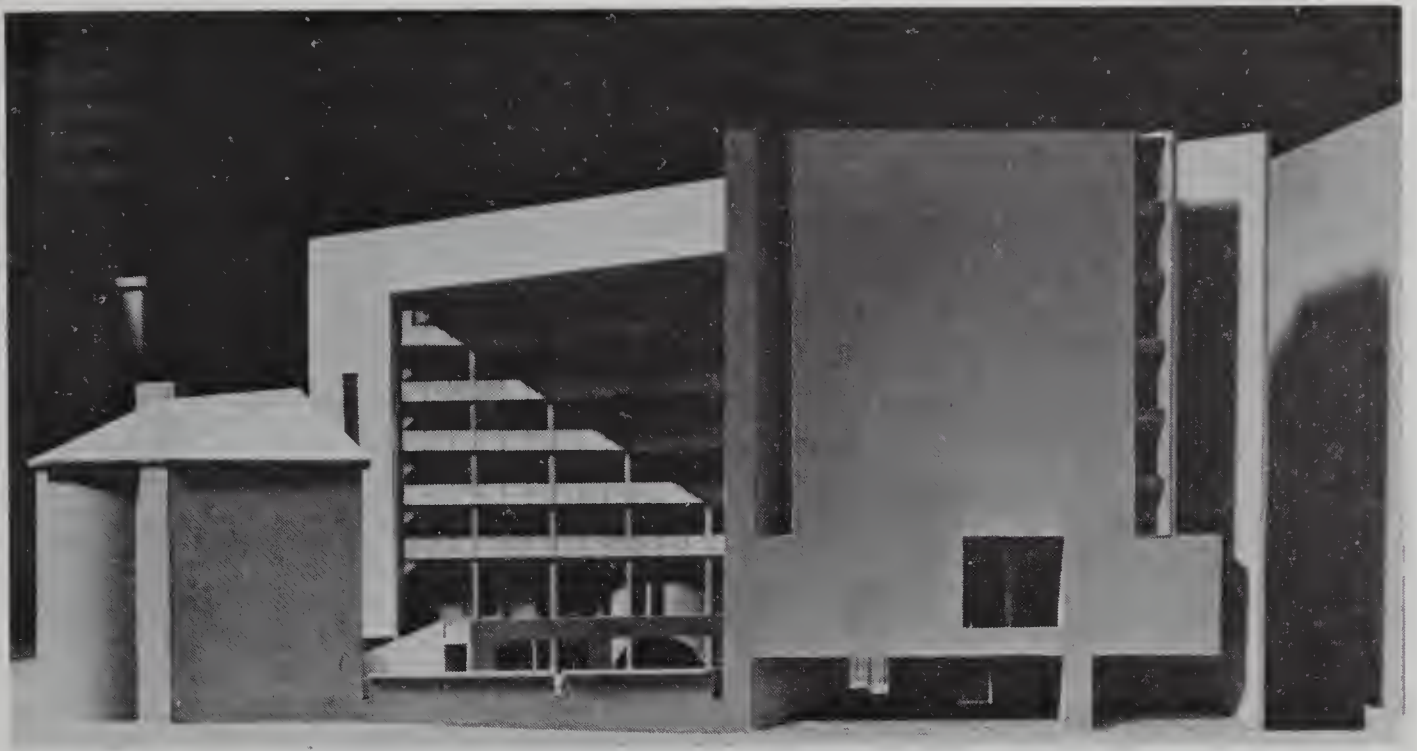
In 1930 the duties of the Commission of Fine Arts were enlarged by the passage of the Shipstead-Luce Act. This act authorized the Commission to advise the District of Columbia Government on plans for private buildings bordering public spaces in certain areas of Washington.⁵⁹ The Commission’s purview under this Act is limited to considerations of height, exterior design and construction. Generally speaking, the area covered by the Shipstead-Luce Act is that part of the city often referred to as “monumental Washington”—the area bordering the Mall, White House, Judiciary Square, Capitol and Union Station. Property bordering Rock Creek Park is also included within the boundaries. The Act was amended in 1939 to include Lafayette Square. Over the years some revisions have been made in the boundary lines, and other amendments have been proposed which would extend the Act to cover additional areas. While the Commission of Fine Arts has not advocated this it has suggested that it might be desirable to study the inclusion of the areas surrounding certain of the circles and large parks of the city.⁶⁰

The American Institute of Architects Headquarters Building

One of the important Shipstead-Luce submissions was the headquarters building for the American Institute of Architects. This was erected behind the historic Octagon House, owned by the Institute. The competition held for the design of the building was won by Mit-

⁵⁹ See Appendix for text of this legislation.

⁶⁰ *Thirteenth Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1940, p. 81.



Model of rejected design for the American Institute of Architects Headquarters building; Mitchell/Giurgola Associates, architects.

chell/Giurgola Associates of Philadelphia. The winning design was never presented to the Commission of Fine Arts; a revised design, on an enlarged site and reflecting the possibility of razing the old Lemon Building next to the Octagon, was presented to the Commission in January 1967. The general feeling of the Commission was that the proposed building would be out of scale with both the Octagon and the surrounding neighborhood. At the June meeting, Gordon Bunshaft, an architect member of the Commission, said: “. . . I think the architect has been given perhaps an impossible problem, because the existing building and its gardens and even its back little building have a unity and ought to be left alone.”⁶¹ A suggestion was made that it would be better to use the Lemon Building (owned by the Institute) if it could be renovated; if not, it could be razed and a new building, simple and unobtrusive, erected on its site.

In February 1968 a revised design was submitted, still predicated on razing the Lemon Building and placing the new structure behind the Octagon. However, the building was considerably smaller and gave the Octagon and its garden more breathing space. While the Commission was happy with this change, the design itself was still not acceptable. The principal objection was that it was too complicated, too theatrical; what was required was very simple background architecture to avoid overpowering the small, early nineteenth century Octagon House. In regard to material both the Commission and the architects agreed that the building should not duplicate the red brick of the Octagon; concrete or granite, gray in color, were suggested as possibilities.

In spite of several attempts to revise the design according to the suggestions of the Commission, the architects could not find a solution

⁶¹ *Transcript of Proceedings*, meeting of 21 June 1967, p. 215.



Model of approved design for the American Institute of Architects Headquarters building; The Architects Collaborative, architects.

which the members felt would be compatible with the Octagon; in September 1968 the Commission of Fine Arts disapproved the design as a whole.

The Institute started over again with a new architect, The Architects Collaborative of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Presentations were made in 1969 and 1970, and the Commission of Fine Arts found the new design simple, straightforward and much more suitable to the site. There were reservations about a projecting section above the entrance, although some members felt that this served as a transition from the intimate scale of the Octagon to the main mass of the building. Generally, however, the Commission felt that this was a disturbing element and that both it and the entrance should be quieted down. The design was revised according to these suggestions, the architects thought that their building had been improved, and in April 1970 the Commission gave its final approval to the design.

The Watergate Complex

The Watergate apartment hotel and office building complex was another project submitted to the Commission under the Shipstead-Luce Act. The site is an important one in the plan of Washington as it is on the Potomac River, adjacent to the Kennedy Center and close to the Lincoln Memorial. For these reasons the Commission of Fine Arts was especially concerned about the design of the buildings. The project first came before the Commission in 1961, and submissions continued to be made as late as 1969. The architect was Luigi Moretti of Italy. Throughout these years the concern of the Commission of Fine

Arts regarding this development centered primarily on the size, massing and particularly the height of the buildings, although there were strong reservations also about some aspects of the design.

The Commission members felt, first of all, that the Lincoln Memorial and the proposed Kennedy Center (not yet built) should be the dominating structures in the area and that the Watergate developers should respect the park-like nature of the site. Also, as parts of several streets had to be closed to permit this development, the Commission thought that the developers should return to the city and the public some additional park space. To this end the villas which were intended to be placed originally in front of the tall buildings were eliminated from the scheme.

Limiting the height of the buildings was a constant problem. In the minutes and transcripts of the meetings are frequent discussions about this with the Commission insisting that the height be kept to 140 feet above the level of the river. There are also repeated requests for a simplification of the design, particularly in regard to the balconies, balustrades and roof structures. Bright colored panels on the balconies were eliminated and the color of the precast concrete panels changed from a near white to a more neutral, warm tone. Of interest in regard to the design is the architect's statement that the curving forms of the buildings were developed originally because the first design for the Kennedy Center was curvilinear in shape. This design was revised because of excessive cost and, as built, the structure is rectilinear. The Watergate buildings retained their curves.

The office building adjacent to the Kennedy Center caused some controversy. The Kennedy Center Board and several private individuals asked in 1967 that it not be built because of its visual effect on the Center. Several of the Commission members, however, noted that the architect of the Kennedy Center had not objected to the Watergate development when he presented his plans, and the Commission did not feel that it could, at such a late date, ask for the elimination of the building.

The Kennedy Center

In a few years time the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has become one of the best known buildings in Washington, to Washingtonians and tourists alike. It is a facility which was badly needed and one which was talked about for many years before it was actually built.

In May 1937 the Commission of Fine Arts discussed a site for a national auditorium with the chairman of the Advisory Committee. At this time Fourth Street and John Marshall Place, N.W. and a site in

Anacostia Park at the end of East Capitol Street were mentioned; later, Pennsylvania Avenue at Third Street, N.W. was suggested.

Nothing more regarding this auditorium was presented to the Commission until March 1955, when it was noted that a bill had been presented in Congress for the construction of a civic auditorium in the District of Columbia. Later in the year several sites were suggested, among them one opposite the Armory and another on Independence Avenue between Fourth and Seventh Streets, N.W., where the Air and Space Museum is now located. In 1956 two other sites were mentioned as possibilities: the urban renewal area in the Southwest section of the city and "Foggy Bottom", near Georgetown in northwest Washington.

By 1957 it was a "National Cultural Center" which was being discussed, and early in 1958 a bill was introduced to build a "National Capital Center of the Performing Arts" on the site between Fourth and Seventh Streets, just south of the National Gallery of Art. This site had previously been made available to the Smithsonian for an art gallery. The members of the Commission of Fine Arts thought that the site might be too small, but stressed the fact that they were very much in favor of the project.

In May 1958 the chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, David E. Finley, invited representatives from government and private organizations interested in establishing a cultural center to a special meeting to discuss possible sites. Four were considered: the Mall site opposite the National Gallery of Art; the Potomac River site at Twenty-sixth Street and Rock Creek Parkway, south of New Hampshire Avenue ("Foggy Bottom"); the Constitution Avenue site of the old Naval Hospital, between Twenty-third Street and Twenty-fifth Street, N.W.; and the site of the old Pension Building, between Fourth and Fifth and F and G Streets, N.W. Use of this space was predicated on the demolition of this historic building. The majority present favored the Potomac River location, and this decision was given to the appropriate Congressional committees.

The views of the Commission of Fine Arts regarding a cultural center were expressed by Chairman Finley in a letter written 2 July 1958 to Congressman Charles A. Buckley, Chairman of the Committee on Public Works. The letter said; in part:

The Commission of Fine Arts has long favored enactment of legislation that will ensure the establishment of adequate facilities for the presentation of music and the performing arts in Washington. We endorse the River Site proposed in this legislation and believe that the provisions of this pending legislation will enable the responsible agencies to accomplish this purpose. We strongly urge favorable action on this bill by your committee.⁶²

⁶² *Seventeenth Report of the Commission of Fine Arts*, 1964, p. 5.



The Kennedy Center; Edward Durrell Stone, architect. Photograph by the National Capital Region, National Park Service.

A National Cultural Center Board was chosen and an architect selected. He was Edward Durrell Stone, and in October 1959 he presented his preliminary design to the Commission of Fine Arts. The building was curvilinear in shape and was to contain three large auditoria and two smaller halls. Because of site restrictions imposed by a freeway project the structure was to be built at the river's edge; in fact, it was to project out over the water. This would necessitate diverting Rock Creek Parkway to the east around the building. While the Commission of Fine Arts was enthusiastic about this first presentation it was concerned that the building would be crowded by a great complex of roadways and approaches to the new Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. In a news release the Commission stated:

. . . Such a center requires space commensurate with the architectural concept. The Commission, therefore, strongly urges that additional space be made available to the north and east of the present site of the Cultural Center and in this way provide protection and a fitting landscape setting for the building. Some consideration should also be given to a possible pedestrian access from the Mall—a consideration which requires a drastic restudy of the proposed highway complex between the Lincoln Memorial and the Cultural Center.⁶³

The design seen by the Commission in 1959 proved to be too expensive to build, and in September 1962 a revised design was submitted. The cost of building the original version was estimated at seventy million dollars, that of the revised version at thirty. Unlike the previous design the building presented was a simple rectangle in shape and did not extend out over the river. Rock Creek Parkway would not have to

⁶³ *Minutes*, 14 October 1959, Exhibit C.

be taken around the building to the east, but would remain along the river under the extended terrace of the Center. The Commission members were still concerned about the size and location of the site, even though the building had been reduced in length from nine hundred to six hundred feet. They felt that the freeways and approach roads to the Roosevelt Bridge still affected the building adversely, isolating it from the rest of the city. There was also a question as to the wisdom of placing three large auditoria in one building and a suggestion that it might be better to place one or two of them in other locations. There were also reservations about the design of the building. At this meeting only the general concept of the plan was approved. In March 1963 when legislation to enlarge the site to some degree was being discussed these reservations were brought up again, but it was decided that it was too late to recommend a change in site or design, and the building was built essentially as presented in 1962.

Lafayette Square

The development of the east and west sides of Lafayette Square during the 1960's was certainly one of the most important projects to come before the Commission of Fine Arts in that decade. Plans for this development had been under consideration by the Commission since 1917 when Cass Gilbert designed the Treasury Annex on the east side of the Square at the corner of Madison Place and Pennsylvania Avenue. At that time it was assumed that the building would eventually be extended along Madison Place north to H Street and that structures of a similar character would be erected on the other sites bordering the Square. This was still the assumption in 1933; in a discussion of new public buildings planned for the White House area, the Commission members said: ". . . Around Lafayette Square the Treasury Department annex should be extended northward to H Street and on the west side of Lafayette Square the State Department should be built. Then the State, War & Navy Building should be remodeled to look like the Treasury Department Building, and used as the President's executive offices."⁶⁴

In 1936 there was another discussion of public buildings surrounding Lafayette Square. In a letter sent to the Chairman of the House Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds the plans for Lafayette Square were reviewed:

The Second of the two principles was that the White House should be recognized as the center of the Executive group of

⁶⁴ *Minutes*, 15 December 1933, p. 2.

Departmental buildings. This principle is now in question. In locating the Treasury Department and the building of the State, War & Navy, this fundamental principle was observed. During the World War Congress provided for the construction of one-third of a building designed to occupy the entire east frontage of Lafayette Square. The purchase of this frontage was (and still is) authorized. The building was designed, but only one-third of it has been constructed. The cornice line of this Treasury Annex was carefully fixed to preserve the dignity of the White House.

In the haste of war times and the urgent need of office space, the plans of a building designed for a hotel, but never financed, were taken over and the War Risk Insurance building of abnormal height and architecturally unsatisfactory was constructed at the corner of Vermont Avenue and H Street. Then the Chamber of Commerce of the United States purchased the corner of Connecticut Avenue and H Street, and there erected a monumental building, with the same cornice line as that of the Treasury Annex. Thus two points were fixed with relation to the White House and the proper development of the frontage on Lafayette Square.

The frontage on the west of Lafayette Square was set apart for a Department of State building— an assignment approved by President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing. For reasons not necessary to go into, this particular project met opposition at the time and as a result a collection of miscellaneous buildings, some old, some new, now occupy this west frontage.⁶⁵

In 1938 a new Public Buildings Program considered the plans to extend the Treasury Annex still valid. However, nothing was done; it was not until 1957 that the matter came before the Commission of Fine Arts again, this time in the form of a request to comment on proposed legislation which would declare Lafayette Square and certain buildings bordering it national historic shrines. The Commission did not approve of the legislation as written, and in a letter to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget the following comments on Lafayette Square were made:

So far as the development of the perimeter of the entire square is concerned, the few remaining small buildings of domestic scale are now very much overshadowed by taller buildings. Recently commercial plans were made for erection of an office building on the west side of the square. This focused attention on the changes that have gradually destroyed the residential character of Lafayette Square. Recently the General Services Administration has started proceedings to acquire the remaining private property on the west side with the expectation that this property would be incorporated with plans that are being made for the development of this square

⁶⁵ *Minutes*, 27 March 1936, Exhibit K, p. 2.

and for enlarging the White House offices. Further governmental delay in the matter will, no doubt, encourage private exploitation of the area.

The Commission of Fine Arts has favored plans to create a unified architectural relationship between the buildings on the square and the White House. We have approved with reluctance designs which have been submitted to us for the erection of privately owned office structures on the north and west sides of the square.⁶⁶

In 1958 Congress approved plans for an executive office building on Jackson Place and a Court of Claims and Court of Customs and Patent Appeals building on Madison Place. In October 1959 the Commission of Fine Arts noted that permission granted by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to the National Grange to erect a building 110 feet high on H Street in the block adjoining Lafayette Square on the west would be detrimental to the development of that side of the Square, since 80 feet had been the traditional height for government buildings in the area.

Approximately one year later, in September 1960, the Commission held a special meeting to consider plans for the two new buildings. Preparations for the development of Lafayette Square had focused attention on the historic buildings still remaining on its east and west sides. In 1959 the Commission of Fine Arts had suggested that the two houses on the corner of Jackson Place and Pennsylvania Avenue be preserved to provide additional space for Blair House, the President's guest house. In 1960 several bills were introduced in Congress for the preservation of Dolley Madison House, the Tayloe House, and the Belasco Theater on Madison Place. It had been agreed by everyone concerned that Benjamin Latrobe's Decatur House on the corner of Jackson Place and H Street should remain. Preserving these small scale historic houses and at the same providing enough space for badly needed government offices in buildings which would not be inharmonious, either with the historic structures on the Square or with the White House, was the design problem the architects faced. Matters were further complicated by the fact that the Tax Court had asked to be included in the new Courts building.

Two architectural firms were employed by the General Services Administration to plan the development of Lafayette Square: Perry, Shaw, Hepburn & Dean; and Shepley, Bullfinch, Richardson and Abbott; both from Boston. At the special meeting in September 1960 the Commission of Fine Arts heard a representative from the General Services Administration summarize the history of the Lafayette Square project and request the Commission's opinion on whether or not a building to house three courts could be built on the east side of the

⁶⁶ *Minutes*, 12 September 1957, Exhibit L, p. 2.

Square or whether there was room for only two courts as previously intended. Mr. Shepley, one of the architects, stated that his firm's studies showed that a three-court building would be very crowded on the site, especially if an 80-foot height limitation were adhered to. The Commission members agreed with this unanimously. It was also observed by Chairman Finley that it was a long-standing tradition that court buildings be placed in the Judiciary Square area; and while it was an accepted fact that at least a two-court building would be built on Lafayette Square, Judiciary Square seemed the logical place for any future courts to go.⁶⁷ Also discussed at this meeting were the problems of relating the new building to the existing Treasury Annex. Suggestions were made that the Annex might be resurfaced to match the new court building or that it might be razed.

This was a joint meeting with the National Capital Planning Commission, and the outcome was that both commissions agreed that a three-court building would be too large and that a two-court building, not exceeding 80 feet in height, should be built on the site.

In 1961 the Commission of Fine Arts began reviewing the architects' plans. Various ways of designing the buildings were presented, with the Commission preferring a scheme which permitted an open, landscaped treatment facing the Square. Towards the end of the year the Commission was expressing disappointment with the direction the buildings were taking. The members did not find them distinctive enough for the important sites they were to occupy. In October 1961 a letter was sent to the Administrator of General Services which said: ". . . The character of the proposed four-story structure that is to stand between Decatur House and the brick building at the southeast corner of Jackson Place remains a major concern. . . ." ⁶⁸

In the meantime President and Mrs. Kennedy had become interested in the project. They were anxious that the old State, War & Navy Building and the Court of Claims (at 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue) not be demolished, that Lafayette Square retain its historical residential character and that the new structures harmonize with the old. Eventually a new architect was called upon to devise a scheme which would attain these ends. He was John Carl Warnecke of San Francisco, and in October 1962 he presented his plans to the Commission of Fine Arts. His idea was to preserve all the old houses on the Square and place the large office structures behind them. The New Executive Office Building would be a ten-story structure and the Court of Claims, eight. The entrances to the office buildings from the Square would be through courtyards opening onto the street. The plan called

⁶⁷ In 1966 the Commission of Fine Arts approved plans for a Tax Court building and in 1974 plans for a District of Columbia Court building, both in the Judiciary Square area.

⁶⁸ *Minutes*, 17 October 1961, Exhibit B.



Model of the west side of Lafayette Square showing the new ten story Executive Office Building in the center. The Renwick Gallery (old Court of Claims) and the Blair-Lee houses on Pennsylvania Avenue are to the left (foreground), and Decatur House is to the right, on the far corner of Jackson Place and H Street. John Carl Warnecke and Associates, architects. Photograph by Allen Photo.

for razing the four twentieth century office buildings on Jackson Place and replacing them with residential scale offices designed in nineteenth century styles to harmonize with the adjacent historic houses, which would be converted for use by small government agencies. The Belasco Theatre on Madison Place, erected in 1895, was the only historic structure scheduled for demolition. The old Court of Claims and the old State, War and Navy Building would be retained and restored. Preservation of the two houses on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Jackson Place was planned in order to augment the facilities of the Blair-Lee Houses.

In this scheme, with Lafayette Square restored to its original residential character, the White House remained the dominant element. The large office buildings, set well back from the edge of the Square and faced with dark red brick to help reduce their apparent size, were taller than the usual government buildings—about the same height as the commercial structures in the area surrounding the square. This added height, however, permitted a reduction in mass, allowing for courtyards and gardens behind the old houses. There was another



Townhouses on Jackson Place, Lafayette Square. The newly-constructed entrance to the courtyard and the Executive Office Building is marked by the flagpoles.

Photograph by J. Alexander.

advantage to be gained by the increased height; the National Grange Building would no longer be the tallest building on the west side of the Square.

Several of the members of the Commission of Fine Arts did not agree with the concept of a residential character for Lafayette Square when it was not actually going to be used that way; they also felt that the majority of the old buildings were not significant enough architecturally to warrant their preservation. The majority of the Commission, however, agreed that the architect's concept was a valid one, and the plan was approved.

The Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial

A memorial to Franklin D. Roosevelt, the site for which was first considered by the Commission of Fine Arts in 1958, is still in the planning stages. The site selected in that year by the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Commission, with the advice of a panel of seven architects, was in West Potomac Park and remains the site under consideration today.

The Memorial Commission held a competition for the design in 1960 and selected a jury which looked at close to six hundred entries. The winning design was entered by the architectural firm of Pedersen and Tilney of New York, assisted by Norman Hoberman and Joseph Wasserman. In January 1962 their proposals were presented to the Commission of Fine Arts. The memorial consisted of eight large concrete stele set at various angles to each other in the landscape. Excerpts from Roosevelt's speeches were to be inscribed on the stele.

A number of prominent architects and sculptors spoke at the meeting, and the statements ranged from enthusiastic support to absolute rejection. Pietro Belluschi, an architect who was on the jury, referred to the memorial as the first one sponsored by the Government in which "the expression is not derivative but creative".⁶⁹ Philip Johnson, another well-known architect, called the design "the epitome of mid-century art" and supported the architect's choice of concrete as the material. He said: "This is not a stone conception and should not be carried out in stone." Douglas Haskell, editor of *Architectural Forum*, spoke of the relationship of the memorial to Roosevelt the man:

We have here a man [Roosevelt] whose approach to problems was most extraordinary . . . He got pieces here, there, put them together in a manner that seemed at random and, lo and behold, the results were lasting . . . This, in architecture, is those pieces brought together in a manner which strikes us first as tentative and then, as you live with it longer, comes in on you. . . .

Now, also, as we all know, Roosevelt was a man who was enamoured of nature . . . This is supremely a monument which fits into nature. . . .

There were other speakers who reacted in quite the opposite way to the design. John Harbeson, President of the National Academy of Design, said:

In our opinion this design is not worthy to express the President who led this country in a great war . . . To be such a

⁶⁹ This and the following quotations from the meeting of 19 January 1962 are from excerpts from the transcript of that meeting, attached to the *Minutes* as Exhibit B.

leader in difficult times he had to understand the value of order, of organization.

In our opinion there is no order in this design, it is a disorganized agglomeration of ugly forms, slabs of different sizes and shapes, not a symbol of greatness.

After these statements the Commission discussed the proposed memorial and decided to postpone any decision until the following meeting so that further consideration could be given to both the design and the advisability of constructing it in concrete. The initial reaction of the members was that while it had definite merit as a design, the memorial would be too large in scale—the tallest stele was 165 feet high. They questioned whether it would relate harmoniously with the Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson monuments and if it had that feeling of repose and permanence so essential to a memorial or was too transitory in effect. There were also serious reservations about the use of concrete—would it be lasting or would it inevitably develop disfiguring cracks?

In February the members made a site inspection and were convinced that the scale of the memorial was too large. A conference was held with representatives of the engineering firm working with the architects to discuss the technical aspects of constructing the memorial in concrete. The architect was also questioned about the design. At this time he said that the Memorial Commission had made the inclusion of some kind of likeness of Roosevelt mandatory, and there would have to be alterations to accommodate this. At the conclusion of the meeting a statement was issued which said, in part:

The members of the Commission of Fine Arts, after careful consideration of the design, chosen by the Jury, for the proposed memorial to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, agreed unanimously to withhold their approval, without prejudice, for the following reasons:

1. The design does not conform with the requirements of Public Law 86-214, which provides that “the competition for the proposed memorial shall be carried out so as to insure that it will be harmonious as to location, design and land use, with the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial”.

- a. As to “location”, the design, by its great size and height, competes with, rather than supplements, the three memorials with which it is required to be “harmonious”.

- b. As to “design”, it is lacking in the repose, an essential element in memorial art, and the qualities of monumental permanence that are the essence of the three memorials with which it must by law conform.

2. Materials. The Commission questions the durability of the materials that are suggested for its execution.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ *Minutes*, 20 February 1962, Exhibit G.

At a Congressional appropriations hearing in June 1962 the Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, David E. Finley, re-stated these views and also said the Memorial Commission's requirements for the inclusion of a statue or bas-relief of President Roosevelt in the memorial was an afterthought, and not compatible in scale with the monumental stele of the winning design. He stated that since the Commission of Fine Arts had not approved this design it could not recommend an authorization of funds to erect it.

In October the House rejected the authorization and in a joint resolution with the Senate asked the Roosevelt Memorial Commission to work with the Commission of Fine Arts to see if the design could be modified so that it could be approved; or to consider another design from those submitted, as an alternative; or a "living memorial", such as an educational institution, stadium, park, or other suitable project.

At the December meeting the members decided first to explore the possibility of modifying the winning design. A meeting was held with the architect and the possibility of reducing the height and changing the material discussed. The Commission did not feel its function was to give specific suggestions about changes in design but said only that the memorial should be more harmonious with the other major monuments in the area. Mr. Pedersen was asked to submit sketches and agreed to do so.

It was not until October 1963 that Mr. Pedersen again appeared before the Commission of Fine Arts. By this time there was an almost totally new membership. Hideo Sasaki, the landscape architect member, was the only one remaining of the group that had seen the design previously. The new members looked at the original design; and while some believed it should be erected and others were doubtful that it could be changed without destroying its integrity, a decision was made to visit the site and talk with the architect before coming to any conclusion.

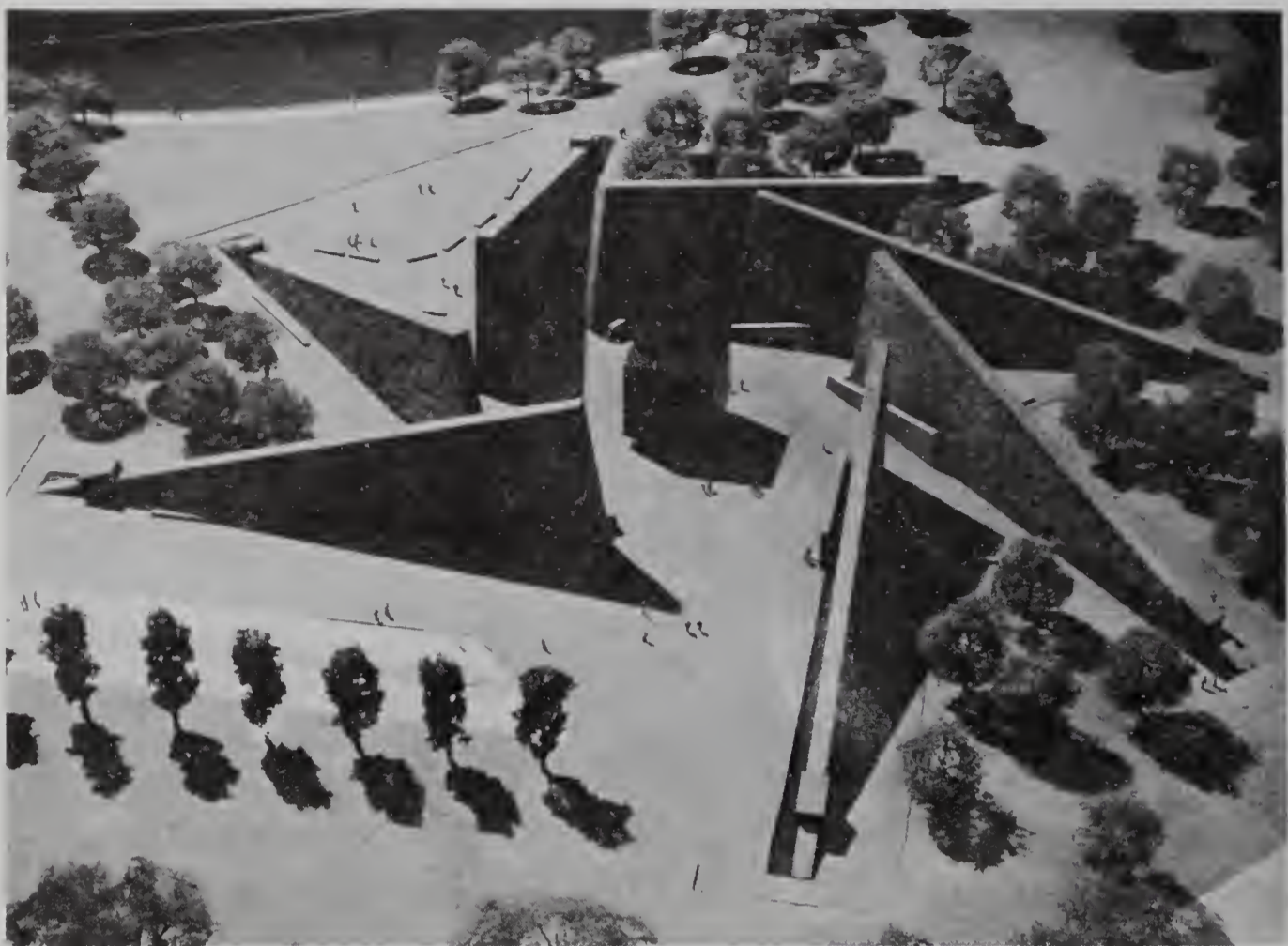
Subsequently, the Commission met with members of the Memorial Commission, the architect and the sculptor. Mr. Pedersen told the Commission members he was confident he could alter his design so that it would meet with their approval. In discussing the Commission's objections, he stated first that there was no question in his mind as to the appropriateness or durability of concrete. As to the relationship of this memorial to others in the area, he said it was meant to be complementary; they are closed and this would be open—a fluid element in the landscape. He felt his memorial definitely had a feeling of repose and was not transitory; it was, however, repose in twentieth century terms. He thought the stele themselves exhibited a timeless feeling. As to height, he had said earlier that the tallest of the stele could be reduced thirty to forty feet without harming the design.



Pedersen and Tilney's revised design for the F.D.R. Memorial.
 Photograph by Louis Checkman.

In May 1964 the Commission saw his revised version. It was smaller in scale, and the relationship of the stele had been changed somewhat to accommodate a statue of Roosevelt within the memorial. The material was still to be cast concrete. The members decided to study the design for a month; in June they voted, in a split decision, to approve the memorial in its revised version. After the vote, during the course of the meeting, the Chairman announced that he had received a telephone call from James Roosevelt saying that the Roosevelt family was opposed to the erection of either the original or the revised design and did not think any alteration could make it acceptable to them. They felt another approach should be made by the Memorial Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts; and if no agreement had been reached by 1 January 1965, the Memorial Commission should be discharged and the Commission of Fine Arts empowered to select another design and make its recommendations to Congress. The family also said it would like to see the memorial treated as a garden area in the nature of an arboretum of principal American trees. The Commission members thought the Roosevelt family should make its feelings known to Congress, which would be the final judge; they did not think the telephone call should affect the vote they had just taken. The Chairman was authorized to send a letter to the Chairman of the Roosevelt Memorial Commission informing him of the Commission's approval of the revised design.

No further action was taken on the Pedersen and Tilney memorial. In January 1967 the Memorial Commission presented a new proposal by Marcel Breuer and Herbert Beckhard, architects. This was also a



Marcel Breuer and Herbert Beckhard's design for the F.D.R. Memorial.
 Photograph by Ben Schnall; Hewlett, New York.

large scale, open air memorial, planned for the same site and in conjunction with a National Rose Garden. It consisted of a paved area with a large dark granite cube in the center on which was etched a photographic likeness of President Roosevelt. Rotating around this center element at 45 degree intervals were seven large triangular slabs of granite. Recorded portions of Roosevelt's speeches would be heard in a small area around the portrait. Paving and benches would also be of granite.

The Commission members discussed the design with the architect and then among themselves. There was a unanimous feeling of strong opposition to this design. There was a general dislike of the slabs and the way they were arranged on the site, having no particular function. There was opposition also to the photographic method of etching the likeness of the President and to the use of recordings of his speeches. The press release that day said, in part:

The Commission feels that such a memorial requires the highest standard of artistic achievement and significance. The proposed design does not fulfill either criteria.

The Commission has studied all aspects of the plan and reached its conclusion with great reluctance, aware of the many difficulties that have been faced by the designer and the Roosevelt Memorial Commission.⁷¹

⁷¹ *Minutes*, 26 January 1967, Exhibit K.

In 1971 the Commission of Fine Arts approved a House Resolution authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the planning and design of a memorial to Roosevelt. In April 1975 a design was submitted by the San Francisco architect and planner, Lawrence Halprin. It has since undergone several revisions and is still under consideration at this writing.

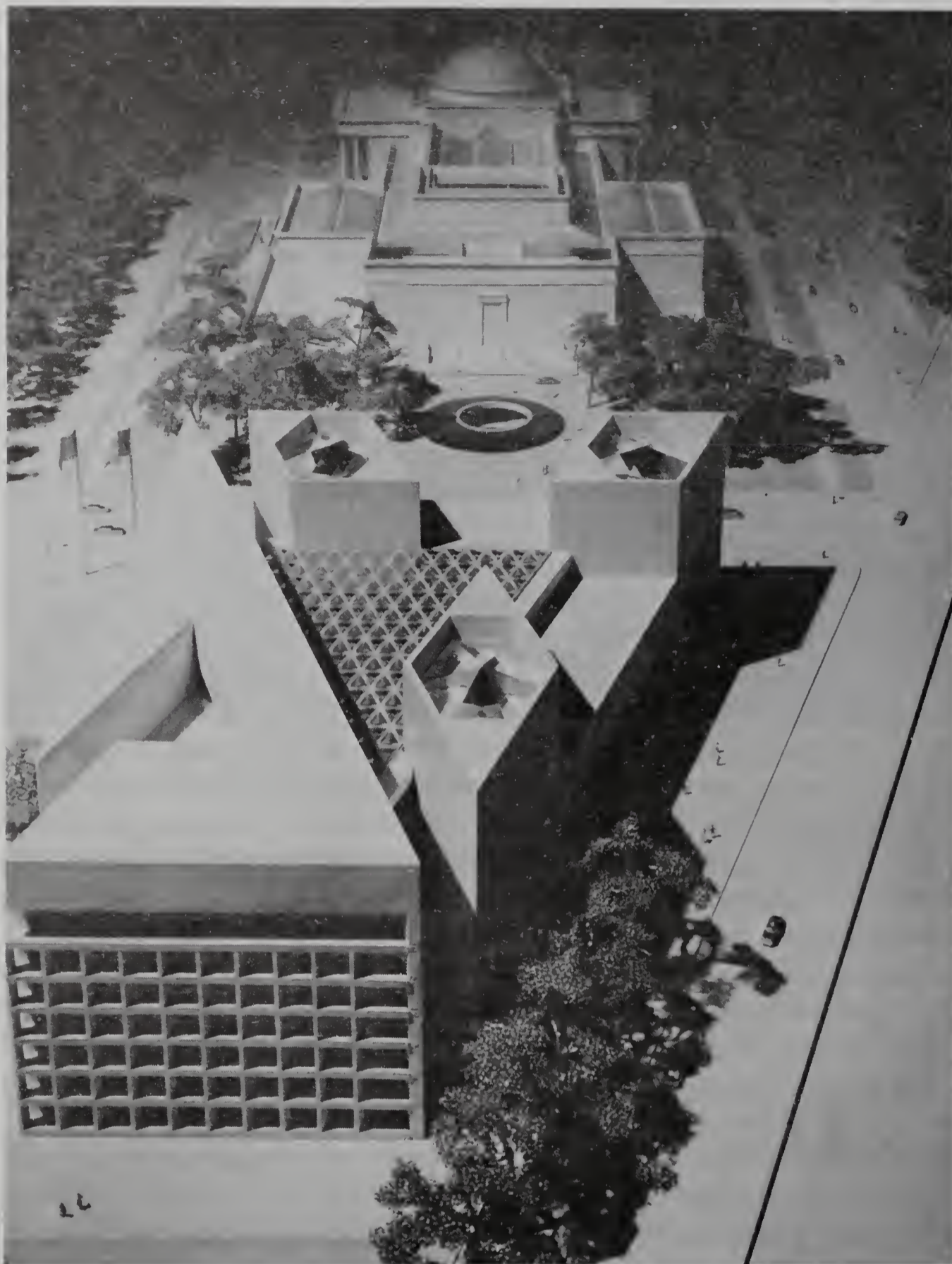
Other Recent Projects

In addition to the projects just discussed, many other major buildings approved by the Commission of Fine Arts have been erected in recent years. Mention has already been made of the new museums on the Mall, the new court buildings on Judiciary Square, and the reflecting pool at the foot of Capitol Hill. Another large project was L'Enfant Plaza and Tenth Street Mall, across from the old Smithsonian buildings on Independence Avenue. This complex includes both Federal Government and private office space as well as a hotel, shops, restaurants and other facilities. Adjacent to L'Enfant Plaza on the east is the new building for the Department of Housing and Urban Development designed by architect Marcel Breuer, who also designed the building at Third Street and Independence Avenue for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Department of Labor, formerly housed in the Federal Triangle, has a new building on Constitution Avenue at Second Street.

A major memorial of the 1960's was the John F. Kennedy gravesite in Arlington Cemetery. The architect's task here was to maintain the beauty of the hillside and not destroy the vista from the Lincoln Memorial to the Custis-Lee Mansion; at the same time the design had to exhibit the monumental quality and the dignity associated with a President's grave. Adequate circulation for large numbers of visitors also had to be incorporated into the design. The Commission of Fine Arts worked closely with the architect, John Carl Warnecke, and approved the plans late in 1964; the grave was dedicated in 1967.

A second Presidential memorial, reviewed in the 1970's, was the Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial Grove in Lady Bird Johnson Park on Columbia Island. Consisting simply of a grove of white pines and low plantings of azaleas, the focal point is a large granite rock from a site near the President's Texas ranch on which are inscribed quotations from his speeches.

Among the many new buildings approved for the District of Columbia Government in recent years was the Martin Luther King Memorial Library, designed by the distinguished architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The Commission of Fine Arts also helped develop the design of the stations for Metro, Washington's subway system. The members



New addition to the National Gallery of Art; I. M. Pei, architect.

hoped to achieve a fresh approach to the concept of subway design for the Capital, not one based on previous designs for other cities. Discussions of the design of the stations and other elements continued from 1965–1971, with the Commission making perhaps its greatest single contribution by insisting that the design of all stations be basically the same, rather than varying from station to station as originally presented. The architect for Metro was Harry Weese of Chicago with Massimo Vignelli as graphic designer.



The Department of Housing and Urban Development; Marcel Breuer and Herbert Beckhard, architects. Photograph by Ben Schnall; Hewlett, New York.

Another recent project was the plan for Pennsylvania Avenue, begun during the Kennedy Administration and as yet not realized. Developed primarily to rehabilitate the north side of the Avenue, as the Federal Triangle had done earlier on the south, the plan has undergone several major changes in concept. A very large paved National Square, as it was called, at the intersection of the Avenue with Fifteenth Street, has been eliminated; and the Washington and Willard hotels in this vicinity, originally scheduled for demolition, are to be retained. Also to be retained is the old Post Office Department building. Originally the plan called for its demolition and the completion of the Federal Triangle. As all new buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue must be reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts, this Commission has maintained close contact with the several organizations charged with deve-



Drawing of the United States Tax Court building; Victor Lundy, architect.

Model of the Martin Luther King Memorial Library; Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, architect.
 Photograph by Bill Engdahl of Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago.





Model of the John F. Kennedy grave at Arlington: view from the Custis-Lee Mansion; John Carl Warnecke and Associates, architects.
 Photograph by Robert C. Lautman.

loping the Pennsylvania Avenue Plan over the years. Currently the Plan is administered by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation; the chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts is a non-voting member of its board of directors. As yet, only two buildings have been constructed under the Plan: the Presidential Building at Twelfth Street and the headquarters building for the Federal Bureau of Investigation at Ninth Street.

The FBI Building presented a difficult design problem because of the conflict between the requirements of the agency and the recommendations of the Pennsylvania Avenue planners. The program of the FBI called for a very large building. The architects of the Pennsylvania Avenue plan were anxious to avoid any huge block-like structures on



Model of a Washington subway station; Harry Weese and Associates, architects.

the Avenue, and to this end preferred that the large masses of the new buildings be placed to the rear. They also wanted to maintain the diagonal line of the Avenue in all new construction. For the architects of the FBI Building, C. F. Murphy and Associates of Chicago, this presented a problem. In their first presentation to the Commission of Fine Arts in October 1964, they said: "...the struggle for us has been the merging of the diagonal with this large mass behind."⁷² Arriving at a satisfactory solution was further complicated by a site which is considerably higher on E Street than on Pennsylvania Avenue. Also, the Pennsylvania Avenue Plan recommended opening up the ground floors of the new buildings with arcades, shops and courtyards to enliven the Avenue, especially after working hours. This was difficult with the FBI building for security reasons; it was also a design problem. The members of the Commission of Fine Arts felt that, visually, the massive building needed to stand on a strong base with few openings. There were many discussions and changes in design in an effort to find a satisfactory solution which would give the feeling of solidity and yet not be oppressive. In April 1967 the Commission and the architects were still struggling with this problem. In a letter written to the General Services Administration, the Commission said: "...The treatment of the base of this building adjoining the sidewalks is particularly oppressive in the present scheme."⁷³ Treatment of the courtyard and the

⁷² *Transcript of Proceedings*, meeting of 21 October 1964, p. 134.

⁷³ *Minutes*, 19 April 1967, Exhibit D.

proportions of the heavy, projecting "tray" on top of the building (originally three, later two stories in height) were other problems discussed by the Commission and the architects over a period of several years. The design was approved by the Commission of Fine Arts in November 1967 with the feeling that many problems remained unsolved, problems which were, perhaps, not capable of a really satisfactory solution, given the restrictions of program and site.

The Old Georgetown Act

The historic section of Washington known as Georgetown was originally an independent city. Founded in 1751, it became a thriving seaport during the Colonial period and was made a part of the District of Columbia when the Federal City was established by George Washington in 1791. A considerable number of early nineteenth century buildings and a few from the late eighteenth century remain in the area, many of these of distinct architectural and historic merit.

As early as 1933 the question of preserving and restoring these old buildings came before the Commission of Fine Arts. In March of that year at a joint meeting of the Fine Arts and Planning Commissions Horace W. Peaslee, a prominent Washington architect, presented studies for the restoration of old houses in Georgetown, for re-routing of traffic and for improving the general appearance of the area. The members were sympathetic to Mr. Peaslee's suggestions. H. P. Caemmerer, Secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts, thought that old gardens should be included as part of the restoration scheme; this idea was approved by the members. Frederic A. Delano of the Planning Commission asked if any thought had been given to enacting legislation which would insure that changes made to historic buildings would first have to be approved by the Commission of Fine Arts or some such authority. A committee was appointed to prepare the data presented for publication, but nothing more on the subject is found in the *Minutes* of the Commission of Fine Arts until 1948, when Chairman Gilmore Clarke wrote the District of Columbia Zoning Commission, saying:

The Commission of Fine Arts desire to place themselves on record as heartily favoring the amendments which the Zoning Commission have proposed in connection with the rezoning of Old Georgetown in order to encourage the preservation of the historic residential character of this notable section of the National Capital. . .

In 1933 the Commission of Fine Arts was called upon to advise in a program to restore certain of the old houses in



The Thomas Sim Lee house, c. 1800, at 3001 M Street, Georgetown.
Before remodeling.

Georgetown and in subsequent years they have cooperated in this noteworthy movement. To allow commercial interests to invade "Historic Georgetown" would be deplorable. . . .⁷⁴

The Zoning Commission changed the zoning classification of sixteen acres of Georgetown property from commercial to residential. In 1949 a draft of legislation to protect historic buildings in Georgetown was presented to the Commission by a representative of a Georgetown citizens group, Stephen P. Dorsey. The Commission agreed that such legislation was worthy of support, and in the following year Public Law 808 was enacted, "to regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings in the Georgetown area of the District of Columbia."⁷⁵ The law authorized the appointment of a board of three architectural consultants to advise the Commission of Fine Arts. At present this board meets once every two weeks to consider submissions under the Old Georgetown Act; major projects are reviewed in detail by the entire Commission of Fine Arts.

During the first decade after the passage of the Old Georgetown Act, the Board of Architectural Consultants favored only the Colonial or

⁷⁴ *Minutes*, 18 February 1948, Exhibit E.

⁷⁵ See Appendix for text of this legislation.



The Thomas Sim Lee house after remodeling. This was one of the early submissions under the Old Georgetown Act and sparked the revitalization of the M Street commercial area. Photograph by Campbell Photo Service.

Federal styles of architecture for renovation or new construction in Georgetown. Recently, however, the emphasis has been on quality of design and compatibility with adjacent buildings rather than on the use of any particular architectural style. One of the first house remodeling projects to reflect this change in thinking was that at 2813 Q Street in 1961. This was a typical late Victorian brick row house. The architect, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, built a second house, a duplicate of the first, on a lot next door, joined the two and redesigned the windows and door in a contemporary manner. After several revisions the window design was approved by the Georgetown Board. Since that time many other contemporary designs, compatible with the old architecture, have been approved for Georgetown buildings.

An example of a mixture of old and new construction in Georgetown is the Canal Square development, off Thirty-first Street between the old Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and M Street. In this case an old brick warehouse building on the canal was remodeled, primarily on the interior. New buildings in a contemporary style, but of the same material and a similar color, were added to it to form a new shopping area with an interior courtyard. The architect for this work was Arthur Cotton Moore who, in association with ELS of Berkeley, California, also remodeled the old Duvall Foundry on the Canal and designed the new building surrounding it.



The Robert Edmund Lee residence, 2813 Q Street, Georgetown; Hugh Newell Jacobsen, architect. Photograph by Robert C. Lautman.



New commercial and office building next to the old Duvall Foundry, Georgetown; Arthur Cotton Moore/Associates and ELS, Berkeley, California, associated architects.



2813 Q Street, rear view. Photograph by Robert C. Lautman.

In spite of the fact that such contemporary work has become increasingly popular in Georgetown, new structures based on the historical styles continue to be built. An example is the Georgetown branch of National Permanent Federal Savings and Loan Association, located at 2901 M Street. This was approved by the Georgetown Board of the Commission of Fine Arts in 1974; the architect was Edmund Dreyfuss.

The preceding discussion has concentrated on the various types of projects reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts and has attempted to show how the review process works. The ideals and aims of the Commission have been touched upon in some of the letters quoted, but they were stated best by Charles Moore in 1939 in a letter written to William Adams Delano. Mr. Moore was in his eighties when he wrote the letter; he was expressing his regret that he could not be present at a dinner Mr. Delano was giving to honor past and present members of the Commission of Fine Arts. The letter is quoted here, in part, because it seems a fitting way to end this history; and, also, because Mr. Moore's rich, Victorian prose is such a joy to read.

Dear Mr. Delano:

. . . I trust that you will have with you Olmsted to recall the days of the Senate Park Commission of 1901, and of its successor, the Commission of Fine Arts. The memory of the friendships of those times furnishes a picture gallery finer than either of the World's Fairs of this year can offer. Loyalties then established continued so long as life lasted. Loyalty to the nation to whose service willing allegiance was given as a patriotic duty. Loyalty to the inspired plan of Washington and L'Enfant, who by faith had the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things now seen. Loyalty to the spirit of that architecture on which Jefferson relied as "the laying out of money for something honorable, the satisfaction of seeing a proof of national good taste," as contrasted with "the regret and mortification of erecting a monument to our barbarism, which will be loaded with execrations so long as it shall endure." Loyalty to the plan of 1901, modestly devised and recorded by true artists as the necessary culmination of an original design so comprehensive as to fit "all times, however remote." Loyalty to fellow members, with respect for one another's opinions, a meeting of minds uncurbed by parliamentary forms—and invariably ending in amicable accord. . . .

In carrying out the conclusions of the Commission, the Chairman, like Saint Sebastian of the pictures, was subjected vicariously to the arrows of vituperative slurs and sarcasms by some Diocletian of the Congress; but found consolation in the duties increasingly placed on the Commission by the Congress of its own initiative. A President of the United States complained to Elihu Root that the Chairman was arbitrary. But he carried out the advice of the Commission as to the location of the Arlington Bridge. A Secretary of the Treasury seeking a compromise on the Great Plaza plans laughingly said that evidently "compromise" meant agreeing with the Commission. He accepted the compromise. All of which goes to prove Charles McKim's dictum—"One can compromise anything but the essence."

Looking back over two decades, I doubt if it would be possible to crowd into twenty years more pleasure than has come to me in association with the successive members of the Com-

mission and those persons with whom the work has brought contacts.

The development of Washington will go on so long as the Republic endures. The problems of the future will be multiplied and will be different from those of the past. Charlatan-ism always is a menace, and it is no less charlatanism when it pervades the field of education in the Arts. The remedy lies not in words but in good design, faithfully carried out; with the firm conviction that beauty alone gives perpetual life. You cannot go wrong or be inadequate if you follow the advice given to me by Senator McMillan half a century ago:

“Remember, Washington is the Capital of the United States. Nothing is too good for the United States Capital. When a problem is to be solved, see that the most competent men in the country are called to solve it—and then see that their advice is realized.”

On that foundation the Commission of Fine Arts was established and has been maintained. Under such guidance it will have continued and increasing usefulness to Washington and the nation. . . .⁷⁶

(signed) Charles Moore

⁷⁶ *Minutes*, 9 March 1939, Exhibit C.

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

A Brief History

1977-1980

Pennsylvania Avenue

In the four years following the first publication of this *Brief History*, the Commission of Fine Arts has reviewed a number of projects which have significantly altered the face of the city. Pennsylvania Avenue and the Georgetown waterfront have undergone the greatest change.

Plans for the rehabilitation of Pennsylvania Avenue, first formulated in the 1960's, began to bear fruit in the late 1970's after undergoing some important revisions. The Commission of Fine Arts played a significant role in developing the design, particularly of the western sector. The original plans of the 1960's called for demolition of the Willard and Washington hotels and the creation of a large, paved National Square in the area between Thirteen and one-half, Fifteenth, E and F Streets (later narrowed to the block between Fourteenth and Fifteenth). This would have effectively ended the strong diagonal of Pennsylvania Avenue in an open square, and would have avoided the awkward situation of the great ceremonial avenue ending unceremoniously in the right angle grid pattern of the city streets. There were two disadvantages to the National Square idea, however: Its enormous paved area, similar in size to the Place de la Concorde in Paris, would have been unbearable in Washington's hot, humid summers; and to build it would have required the demolition of two Washington landmarks, the Willard and Washington hotels, at a time when the preservation movement was just beginning to gather momentum. At a meeting on 17 October 1973 the Commission of Fine Arts saw two alternative plans for the area: one which kept the hotels and the other in which they were demolished. Both showed a scaled-down plaza in front of the Willard site, and a memorial to General John Pershing on the trapezoidal space between the Willard and the Commerce Department to the south. The right-of-way of Pennsylvania Avenue from Fourteenth to Fifteenth Street was to be kept open but the street itself closed to traffic, except during the Inaugural and other important parades.

The Commission was not convinced by either scheme, particularly because of the closing of the avenue and the hard-edged quality of the Pershing Memorial design. On 12 June 1974 the Commission members



National Square concept, 1964. Photograph by Louis Checkman; courtesy Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation.

viewed a mock-up of the memorial and, confirming their previous assessment, found it too architectural. A letter was written to the American Battle Monuments Commission, under whose auspices the memorial would be built, saying the Commission favored a landscape solution for the area (Square 226), in which the Pershing Memorial itself would be just one element.¹

In July 1975 another submission was made, showing the retention of the Willard and Washington hotels and more landscaping on the site of the Pershing Memorial; the closing of Pennsylvania Avenue between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets was still assumed. In a letter to the American Battle Monuments Commission, the Commission said:

You will recall that in our letter of June 14, 1974, we favored a relatively informal termination of Pennsylvania Avenue—a gradual transition between the axiality of Pennsylvania Avenue and the relaxed landscaping beyond Fifteenth Street leading to the Ellipse. The Pershing Memorial was to be an event in the parklike setting and *not* a dominant feature around which the designs for the Avenue were to revolve.

We still hold to this view, but believe the idea should be carried further, treating the entire area between Fifteenth, Fourteenth, E and Pennsylvania Avenue as a single unified landscape with emphasis on grass and trees. The design should generally be informal. . . .

¹ 14 June 1974, J. Carter Brown to Col. William P. Jones, Jr., *Minutes*, 12 June 1974, Exhibit 10.

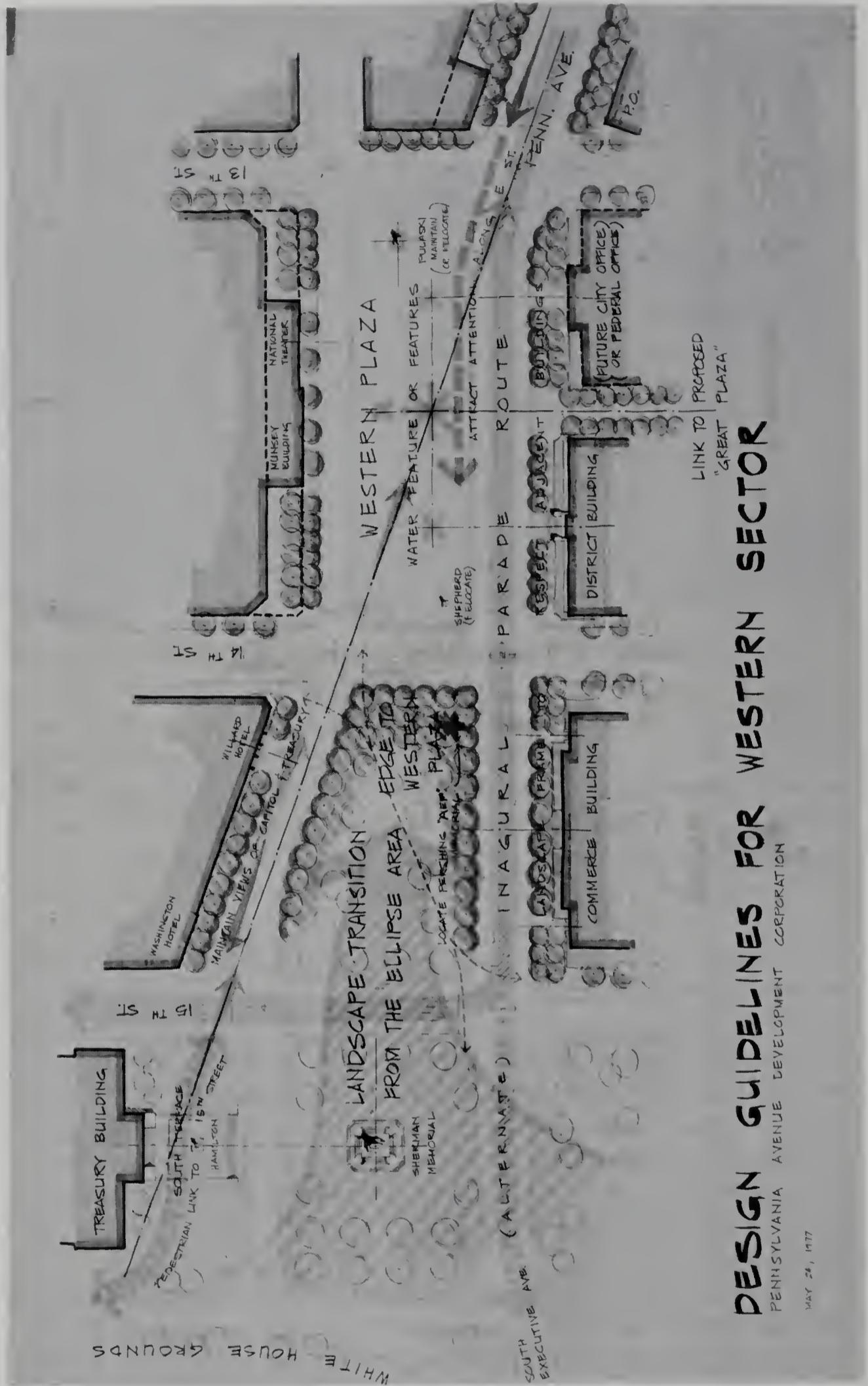
All of this falls within the larger context of the memorial which in turn points up the necessity for a continuing joint study by the Battle Monuments Commission and the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation.²

Growing dissatisfaction on the part of the Commission with the design proposals for this part of the avenue caused the staff to do some research into historic plans for the area and to investigate the current problems, including traffic flow. At a briefing session on 17 September 1975, the Secretary of the Commission, Charles H. Atherton, presented the historical background and a suggestion as to how the area might be treated. He said that the real solution to dealing with the end of the avenue and the Pershing Memorial site was not in the treatment of the area between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets, but in the block to the east in front of the District Building and the National Theatre. Turning this into a plaza would get rid of the awkward route of E Street with its leftover triangles and traffic islands and would provide a more fitting setting for the front of the District Building. It would also move the focus away from the abrupt ending of the avenue at Fifteenth Street while still allowing for it to be open to traffic and for the vista from the Capitol to the Treasury to be maintained. The Secretary then noted that an architecturally framed space had been shown at this location by L'Enfant, Ellicott and the McMillan Commission, as well as the architectural consultants for the design of the Federal Triangle. The plaza would be developed on existing setback lines to avoid the demolition of any existing buildings, such as the National Theatre.

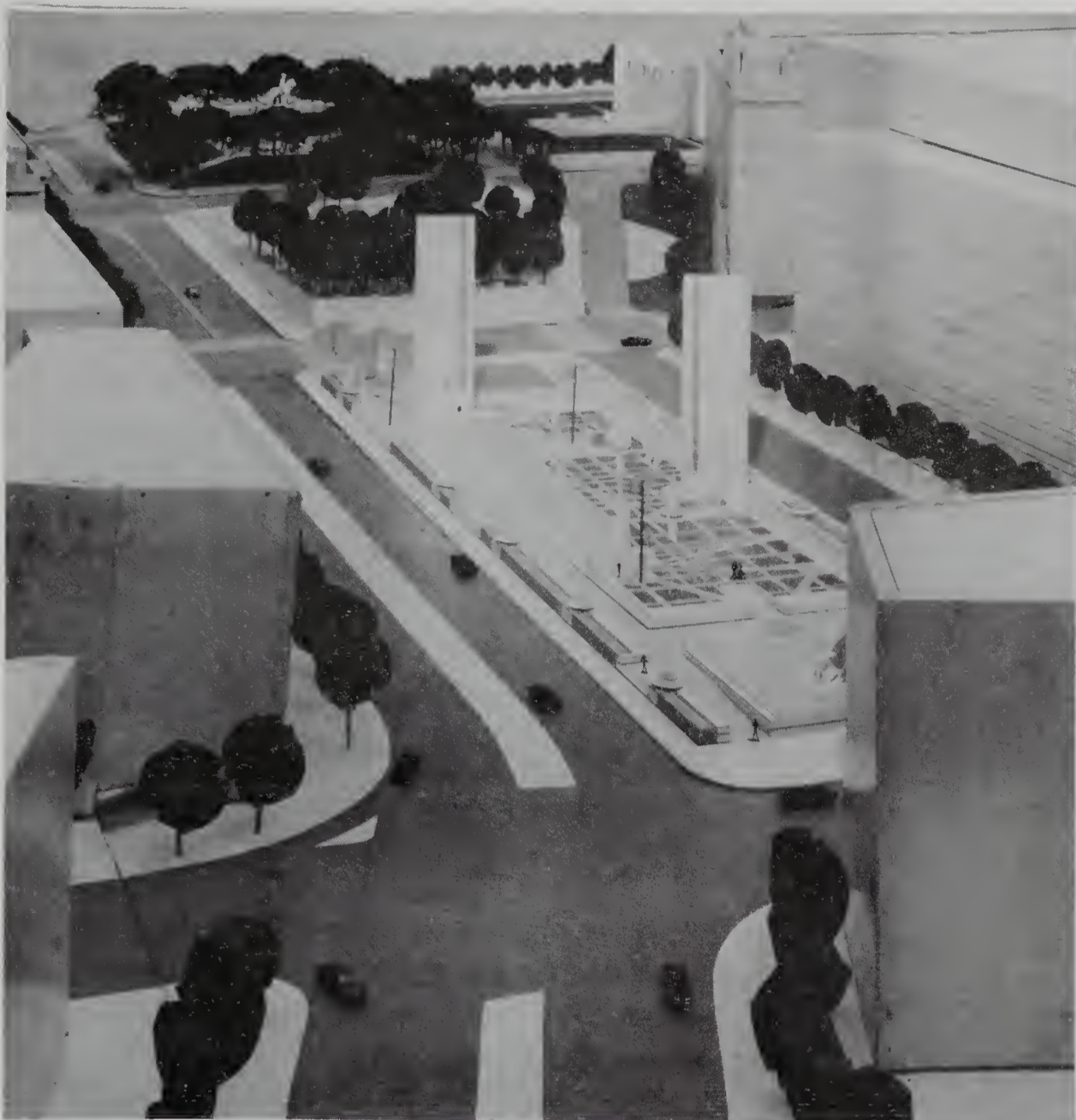
When John Woodbridge, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), made another submission in November 1975, he showed several schemes for a landscaped plaza between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets which would also provide space for the Pershing Memorial. The right-of-way of Pennsylvania Avenue through this plaza was shown, but it was still closed to traffic. At this time the Commission asked Mr. Woodbridge if PADC would re-examine the premise of closing the street and also study the idea of placing a square between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets. He agreed to a restudy of the whole problem, but was convinced at the time that traffic problems would result if the current plan was abandoned.

In January 1976 PADC announced it was reopening the issue of the design of the western sector of the avenue. Tentative efforts were made to develop a landscape solution for the area near the Willard, open the avenue between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets, and design a plaza to the east. District Department of Transportation officials were consulted and did not foresee any problems arising from the new

² 13 August 1975, J. Carter Brown to Col. Frederick Badger, *Minutes*, 30 July 1975, Exhibit G.



Modified Fine Arts Commission plan for the western sector of Pennsylvania Avenue, 1977. Photograph courtesy Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation.



Robert Venturi's scheme for Western Plaza, 1978. Photograph courtesy Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown.

traffic flow patterns. In April the Commission reviewed a conceptual design for the western sector and approved it.

A set of guidelines for the development of this part of the avenue, consistent with the Commission's comment over the preceding three years, was issued by PADC in May 1977. These guidelines were to provide a design framework for their consultants. In July the Commission approved the guidelines as a basis for the final design.

The consultant hired to design the new Western Plaza was Robert Venturi, of the firm of Venturi and Rauch, George Patton, Inc. In March and again in May of 1978 he presented his plan. Venturi saw the plaza as "an open, urban, hard-edged space in contrast to the new park on Square 226."³ Drawings and a model showed a simple, rectangular

³ *The Plaza for the Western Sector of Pennsylvania Avenue*, a written statement by Venturi and Rauch, George Patton, Inc., 23 May 1978. *Minutes*, 23 May 1978, Exhibit D.

space with clipped shrubbery and low walls framing the central paved space. On the central portion of this paved area was inscribed a portion of the L'Enfant plan for Washington. Miniature "stylized sculptured versions" of the Capitol and White House were placed over their locations on the plan. Two one hundred foot high white marble pylons flanked the Pennsylvania Avenue vista and were counterpointed by a pair of flagpoles in the space opposite the District Building. The Pulaski statue at the east end remained undisturbed and surrounded by shade trees.

The two most distinctive and controversial elements in the scheme were the two tall pylons. Venturi explained their presence in this way:

We think the plaza should have two forms in it: two vertical elements, both incomplete in themselves, oriented toward the diagonal axis. . . . From down the avenue and by their positions within the plaza, they should frame the portico of the Treasury and the trees in front of it. From the east side they would be almost scale-less with white marble and a flush black marble stripe; on the west side there is an overall pattern in bas-relief. The flag poles and flags add a dimension of symbolism and movement to the composition.⁴

While Mr. Venturi recognized that L'Enfant's axes in Washington were generally terminated by architectural or sculptural forms, he recalled another option in Baroque planning—the framing of an open axis by rows of trees, as at Versailles or by columns, as off the Piazza San Marco, Venice. He said, "These frames make something positive out of just-space."⁵ "Just-space" was exactly what existed at that part of Pennsylvania Avenue, and while the two pylons may not have been as grand as a tree-framed axis, Venturi commented:

But our framed image doesn't make a bad picture—and it is picturesque in several ways. It is an asymmetrical composition, a Romantic scene of a Classical portico in a rural landscape whose prettiness Mills in mid-century would have appreciated. It is reminiscent too of the oblique view of the portico of San Giorgio across the lagoon framed by the two columns on the Piazzetta of San Marco. And it is a symbol of American pragmatism, perhaps—framed in a Baroque plan and developed not with the authority of a prince but through the vagaries of checks and balances.⁶

The Commission found the concept of the pylons and the use of the L'Enfant plan brilliant, but expressed reservations about the models of the Capitol and White House and the use of the flagpoles. PADC returned in July with a request for approval of the design concept only, including the L'Enfant plan and the pylons, but not the models or the flagpoles, which were still under study. Approval was granted.

By March 1979 the plaza design had been revised. The pylons had been

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

removed because of lack of support by the voting members of the PADC. Flagpoles were used at the west end and in front of the White House and Capitol models, and decorative urns placed along the low wall held seasonal plants. The Commission of Fine Arts was not enthusiastic about this revised design, particularly because of the removal of the pylons and the retention of the Capitol and White House models. Member Edward Durell Stone, Jr., also found the urns unsuitable, and expressed the opinion that the entire scheme **had** been seriously weakened. The Commission told the representative from PADC that it would not make



Western sector, Pennsylvania Avenue; February 1981. Western Plaza in foreground. Pershing Park under construction beyond.

any decision on the design until the questioned elements had been restudied and presented in detail. A presentation in June showed all vertical elements removed, including the White House and Capitol models, and a simplified design for the urns. Lettering and spacing for the inscriptions to be cut into the plaza surface were discussed, as was the material selection for the depiction of the various elements of the L'Enfant plan, including ground plans in brass of the Capitol and White House. Other individual items within the plaza were approved in September 1979; however, the Commission never gave final approval to the modified plan as a whole.

Pershing Park, the other major area in the western sector, also underwent changes as a result of Commission review. The consultants for this area, landscape architects Paul Friedberg and Jerome Lindsey, first presented their design in March 1979. It showed the trapezoidal area framed by a stand of trees on the west, south and east sides, with the Pershing Memorial to the southeast, a pool/skating rink with a fountain to the west, and a paved cafe area bordered by a single row of trees along Pennsylvania Avenue. The members were pleased with the heavy landscaping and the way the trees and mounding of the earth had “cupped” the space, especially along Fourteenth and E Streets where the grade drops noticeably. The tendency in earlier designs for the space to “leak out” and make of the park an amorphous, uninviting area had been a major element of concern to the members. They were pleased, too, with the concept of the pool and the placement of the Pershing Memorial; however, they considered the colonnade, arbor and waterfall at the



Winning design for Willard Hotel restoration and addition; Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, architects. Photograph courtesy Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer.

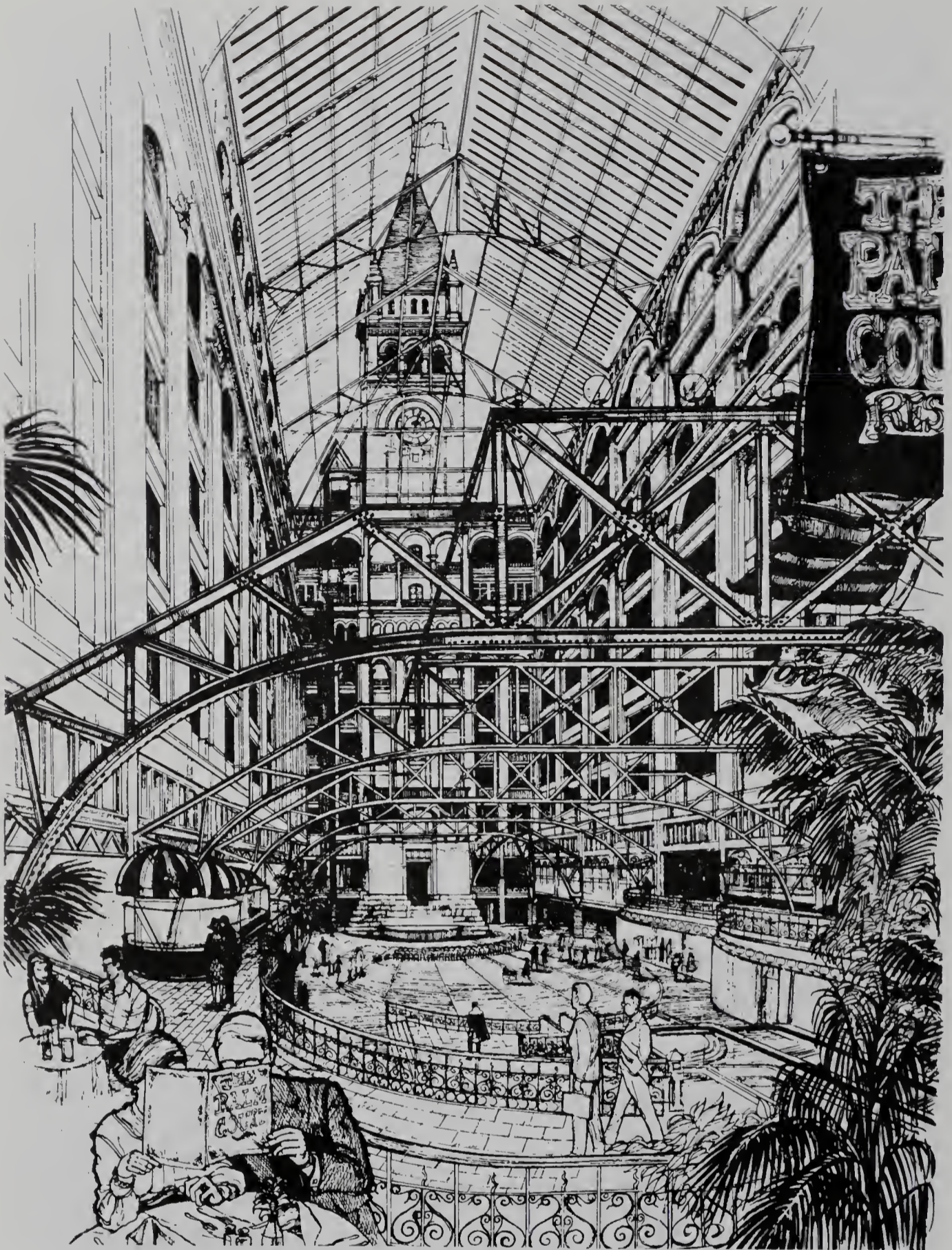
western end of the pool too complicated and fussy. After several other submissions in which the pool area was redesigned and simplified, the final plans were approved in December 1979. The Pershing Memorial itself will consist of a standing life size figure of General Pershing by sculptor Robert White, framed by two granite walls on which will be incised maps and inscriptions relevant to Pershing's campaigns in World War I. The immediate area will be paved and completed with a granite bench.

Pershing Park and Western Plaza were the major submissions reviewed by the Commission for PADC between 1977 and 1980. However, many other decisions were made. Street lighting was reviewed several times, with the Commission strongly recommending the use of the traditional Washington street light as the decorative fixture along the avenue. Paving, traffic signs, street furniture and designs for tree grates were also reviewed by the Commission during these years.

Designs for the restoration and remodeling of two landmark structures on Pennsylvania Avenue were also seen by the Commission, as well as a plan to complete the Federal Triangle. The landmarks were the old Post Office building, designed by William Edbrooke in 1899, and the Willard Hotel, the work of Henry Hardenburgh in 1901. Both were scheduled for demolition in the early plans for the avenue.

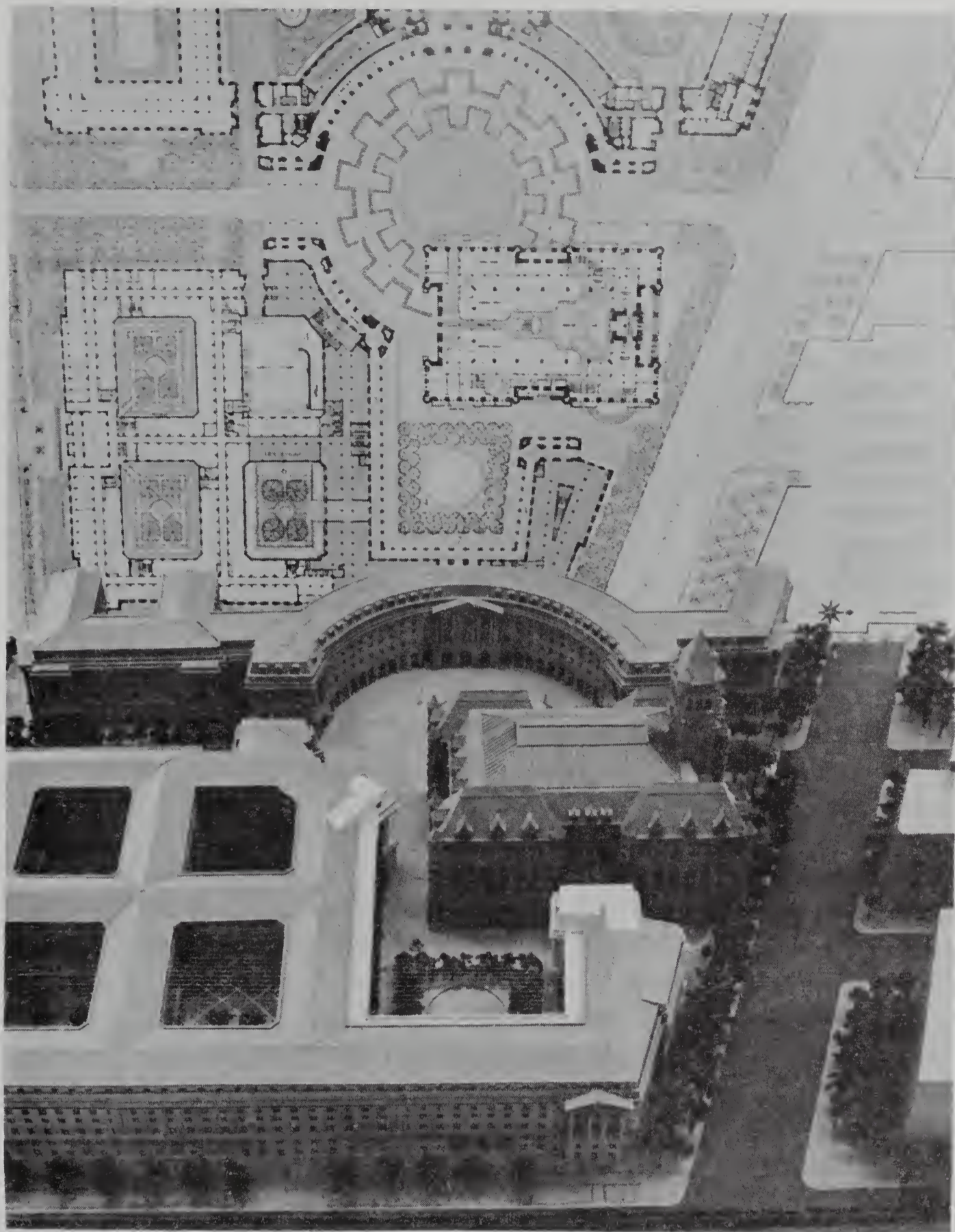
The developer and architect for the restoration of the Willard and the new addition to it were chosen by competition. Submitting the winning design were developer Stuart Golding and the Fairmont Hotel Company of San Francisco and architects Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer of New York. In December 1979 architect Malcolm Holzman made an informal presentation of the schematic design to the Commission of Fine Arts. He said the hotel would be restored as nearly as possible to its original appearance: limestone base, unpainted buff brick main section and dark slate mansard. The great interior public spaces would also be faithfully restored. Of special interest was the design for the addition, a series of "small Willards", similar to the original building in general style but not in detail. These would be separated from the old building by an internal street, lined with shops, connecting F Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. The members were pleased with the imaginative quality of the design and looked forward to reviewing more detailed plans. These had not yet been presented by the close of 1980.

The architect for the Post Office remodeling was also chosen by competition; the winner was Arthur Cotton Moore Associates of Washington. In January 1978 Mr. Moore presented his plans to the Commission. He pointed out that there would be little change to the Pennsylvania Avenue or Twelfth Street facades, other than that provided by a thorough cleaning. Inside, the lower two floors would be devoted to commercial use, including a restaurant in the large atrium, while the upper floors would house Government offices. The members were happy to see a lively reuse of the old building, although



Winning design, interior remodeling of the Old Post Office building; Arthur Cotton Moore Associates, architects. Photograph courtesy Arthur Cotton Moore Associates.

Chairman J. Carter Brown told the representative present from the General Services Administration that the Commission felt strongly that another project should be carried out at the same time—the finishing off of the ends of the Internal Revenue Service building behind the Post Office. These facades had been left unfinished when the Federal Triangle was built because of the expectation that the old Post Office would soon come down and the great circular open space between the



Winning design, master plan for the Federal Triangle; Harry Weese and Associates, architects. The building with the tower is the Old Post Office. In the foreground is the IRS building with proposed additions shown in white. Just beyond the Old Post Office is the hemicycle referred to in the text. Photograph courtesy Harry Weese and Associates.

Internal Revenue Service Building and the new Post Office Department completed. He said these unfinished ends represented one of the principal visual difficulties on Pennsylvania Avenue, and if the changes proposed for the rear of the old Post Office were allowed to go ahead without regard to the surrounding buildings and open spaces, then the final solution to this larger design problem would be put off indefinitely.



“Metropolitan Square” development, incorporating the old Keith-Albee and Metropolitan Bank buildings. The United States Treasury is shown across the street, to the far right. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, architects; photograph courtesy The Oliver T. Carr Company.

In September 1978, the General Services Administration announced that three architectural firms had been asked to enter a competition for the completion of the Federal Triangle. In March 1979 the winning design was presented to the Commission of Fine Arts by Harry Weese and Associates of Chicago. The members looked at a model and drawings which showed a variety of ways in which the Triangle would be opened up to the public—walks, tours, landscaped courtyards and exhibit areas. The plans also provided for the finishing off of the ends of the Internal Revenue Service building to match the original design, and for correcting a similar situation at the Post Office Department building. The beautiful hemicycle on the eastern side of the Post Office Department was provided with its own paving pattern and a water feature, thus making it a well-defined urban space.⁷ Finally, the other large open area originally planned for the Triangle, the Great Plaza at the western end, was once again shown as a landscaped public space, its function as a parking lot retained but banished to underground levels. This concept for the completion of the Federal Triangle was approved by the Commission, but no further formal presentations had been made by the end of 1980.

Under the Shipstead-Luce Act the Commission reviewed alterations and additions to two privately owned landmark structures in the Pennsylvania Avenue area. They were the Keith-Albee and Metropolitan

⁷In the original Triangle design, the hemicycle was to have been a full circle, one of the major open spaces in the design. It was never completed because of the continued existence of the Old Post Office.

Bank buildings, on Fifteenth Street opposite the Treasury Department. The fate of a third old building on the site, the Rhodes Tavern, built in 1801, had not been decided at the end of 1980. Many months were spent working with the developer, Oliver T. Carr; his architects, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill; the city government, and interested citizens in trying to preserve a substantial segment of these two buildings which complement the Treasury so effectively. At the same time the Commission reviewed and has approved the new commercial/ office building to be erected behind the landmark structures. Other new private construction on Pennsylvania Avenue reviewed by the Commission under the Shipstead-Luce Act included two commercial buildings at Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets, and preliminary designs for major complexes planned for Tenth and Fourteenth Streets, the latter to adjoin the National Press Club building and include the old National Theatre.

Georgetown Waterfront

A second area of the city with which the Commission has been continually involved over the past four years is the Georgetown waterfront. Major development has taken place between M and K Streets; for example, the Paper Mill project included 102 townhouses, and Georgetown Park will provide space for 130 shops. Large office and apartment buildings have also been erected or are under construction. Following its mandate under the Old Georgetown Act to preserve the character of the historic town, the Commission has reviewed new construction proposals very carefully and faced the difficult task of trying to preserve a balance between old and new. The area between M Street and the river has historically been primarily commercial, with large industrial and warehouse buildings serving the old port. The Commission has encouraged a substantial amount of residential construction in this area also and has succeeded in persuading developers to reduce voluntarily both the height and mass of their projects. One of the more successful of the new developments, the Flour Mill project between the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and K Street, retained and restored both the early nineteenth century Bomford flour mill and the early twentieth century Wilkins-Rogers mill building, as well as adding new office and apartment construction. The local chapter of the American Institute of Architects gave it an award for historic preservation in 1980; the architect was Peter Vercelli of ICON.

The future of the actual waterfront area in Georgetown, between K Street and the Potomac River, was still uncertain at the end of 1980. For a number of years the Commission has urged that the private land in the area be purchased by the Federal Government and made part of the National Park system, thus completing the "green necklace" along the shores of the Potomac in the nation's capital. With the rapid and intensive development north of K Street in the past four years, this has seemed



The Flour Mill project, as seen from the banks of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, Georgetown. Peter Vercelli of ICON, architect; photograph courtesy ICON.

even more imperative. Bills have been introduced in the Congress to effect this purchase, but thus far no action has been taken. The Commission of Fine Arts rejected one proposal for a massive development on this land in 1979. During 1980 it reviewed preliminary plans for less massive and more sensitive construction. In spite of the many attractive qualities of this new project, however, the Commission remains firmly convinced that Georgetown has already absorbed the maximum amount of new development, and that the waterfront should be devoted solely to recreational purposes. The Commission has testified at Congressional hearings and appeared numerous times before citizens groups on this matter.

A Georgetown project of quite a different nature was the renovation of Hamilton Arms, a residential complex on Thirty-first Street between M and N Streets. Consisting primarily of a group of small mid-nineteenth century houses and alley dwellings, it was given a unique, quasi-European flavor by the paintings and tile work of Molly Brinckley Reid, who with her father, remodeled the houses in the 1940's. After the death of Mrs. Reid and her husband in 1976, the property was sold and plans submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for renovation, some demolition, and new construction on the site. The proposals ranged from minor renovation to almost total reconstruction of some of the badly deteriorated houses. While there was a realization that some major changes would have to be made to save the buildings, there was also strong resistance on the part of tenants, some Georgetown residents and preservation groups to any change which would destroy the character of the "village". The Commission worked with these groups and with architect Richard Stauffer over a period of three years to achieve an acceptable degree of alteration, keep demolition to a minimum, and blend in new construction. Plans for the new work had not been given final approval at the end of 1980.

The Skyline

Closely related to the Commission's concern for the use and appearance of the Georgetown waterfront is its interest in preserving the heavily wooded Arlington shore of the Potomac, as viewed from the major monuments on the Mall and from the Kennedy Center. After being alerted to the proposals to build three new commercial structures in Rosslyn, Virginia, which would project far above the tree line in the area opposite the memorials, the Commission consulted with the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Park Service, and the result was a suit brought by the Department of the Interior in the Federal court system against Arlington County early in 1979. The Commission appeared as an expert witness testifying to the undesirable effect of the buildings as isolated tall objects competing with the Mall memorials and the Capitol dome, thus marring their symbolism and the



Lawrence Halprin's proposal for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, 1978.
 Photograph courtesy the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Commission.

horizontality of the city, supported by the building height limit and the Commission of Fine Arts since 1910. Despite the fact that the suit was not successful, its wide publicity brought this problem to the attention of citizens and local governments in the area, and the Commission is satisfied that it was a worthwhile effort.

Monuments and Memorials

Several alterations to existing memorials and proposals for new ones have come before the Commission in the years between 1977-1980. The Commission has worked with the National Park Service to find a way to add the names of Alaska and Hawaii to the Lincoln Memorial without detracting from the beauty of the structure; it has also reviewed proposals to alter the size and shape of the windows of the Washington Monument so the view would be more easily seen by the handicapped and small children and so that the windows themselves would be more attractive from the exterior. The new memorial to General Pershing has already been mentioned, and a second new memorial, to the signers of the Declaration of Independence, is soon to be constructed in Constitution Gardens, on the island in the lake. It will be a small, landscape design which will not spoil the natural beauty of the island.

Although construction is uncertain because of lack of funds, a new design for the memorial to President Franklin D. Roosevelt was

reviewed by the Commission a number of times during the late 1970's. Proposed for a site in Potomac Park, the design by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin of San Francisco was first seen in 1975; at that time the Commission considered it much too large and architectural for this tranquil site on the river's edge. Responding to this criticism, Mr. Halprin reduced the size and revised the design over a period of years. The plans finally approved in 1979 showed a considerably scaled-down version of the original: a landscape design with numerous water features and bas-relief sculpture depicting events in the President's life.

The Commission's responsibilities at Arlington Cemetery since 1976 have included the approval of the design of the Columbarium in 1977, and plans for repairs and handicapped alterations to the Memorial Amphitheatre in 1980.

Other Projects

Of the many interesting submissions made to the Commission of Fine Arts over the past four years, only a few can be mentioned in a publication of this nature. The State Department has submitted more than the usual number of projects recently. A new building at 1889 F Street, N.W., was approved for the Organization of American States, and at the International Center at Van Ness Street and Reno Road,



Model of Bahrain Chancery; The Architects Collaborative, Inc., architects. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal; courtesy The Architects Collaborative, Inc.

N.W., new chanceries were approved for Israel, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan. Each building will exhibit some of the flavor of the native architecture of the country, and when completed the Center promises to be an interesting visual addition to the city. Adjoining the International Center will be the new headquarters building for Intelsat, the international satellite communications organization. In December 1980 the Commission responded enthusiastically to an informal presentation of the preliminary design by Australian architect John Andrews.

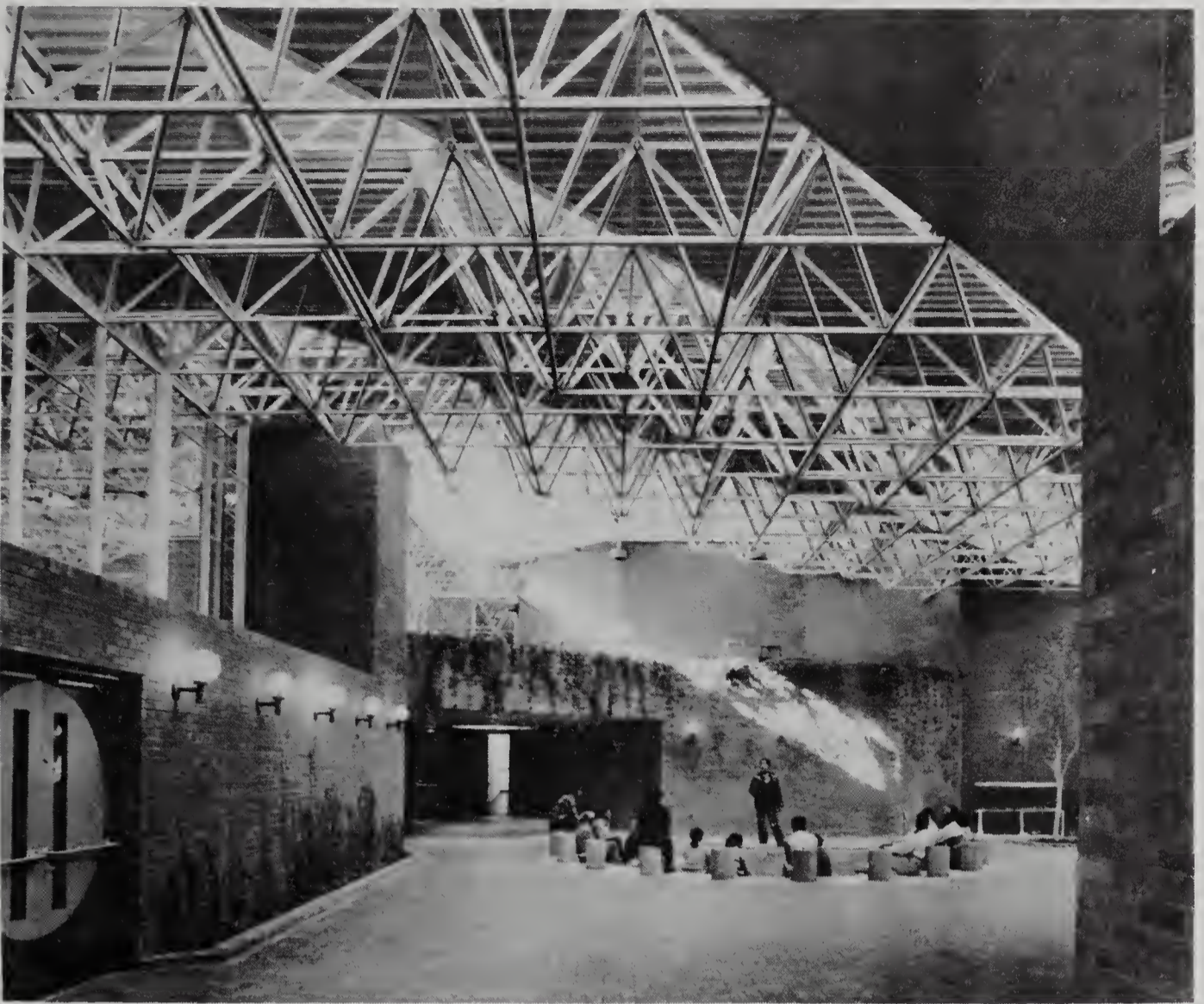
Another important preliminary design seen by the Commission was the development concept for the South Quadrangle of the Smithsonian Institution. Located between the old Castle and Independence Avenue, the area will contain two new museum buildings: an addition to the Freer Gallery of Art and a new home for the Museum of African Art, recently made a part of the Smithsonian. The greater part of these new buildings will be underground, so that the dominance of the Castle in this area will not be diminished. Making the preliminary presentation of site plan and design concept, in April 1980, was Jean-Paul Carlhian of the firm of Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott.

The Commission has continued to work closely with the District of Columbia Government also. As a joint sponsor of the Committee on Landmarks and administrator of the Old Georgetown Act, the Commission testified before various committees and the City Council on the subject of a pending city-wide historic preservation ordinance, "The Historic Landmark and Historic Preservation Act of 1978." The Commission discussed the advisability of such city-wide landmark protection as well as the potential danger of duplicate review in those areas such as Georgetown, the Shipstead-Luce area and the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation district, all now overseen by the Commission of Fine Arts as mandated by Congress.

For the District of Columbia Government the Commission has reviewed, among many other submissions, plans for the new Civic Center, a municipal building on Judiciary Square, several schools and libraries, and landscaping and recreational area plans for the Fort Lincoln development.

In the interest of conserving energy, the Commission investigated the efficacy of solar film and solar screens and approved their experimental use on several Federal office buildings. A solar collection system above the cabinet room in the west wing of the White House was approved after careful consideration was given to its appearance from various vantage points. Perhaps the most interesting of the submissions with an energy aspect was the International Cultural Affairs Center at Georgetown University with roofs which will act as solar producers of electricity.

An administrative achievement worth noting in this addition to the *Brief History* is the formulation and publication of the Commission's Rules and Regulations. Drawn up with the aid of Commissioner Philip



District of Columbia Center for Therapeutic Recreation; The Cooper-Lecky Partnership, architects. Photograph courtesy The Cooper-Lecky Partnership.

W. Buchen, they outline the function and organization of the Commission of Fine Arts, meeting and procedural details, and policies. The Rules and Regulations were published in the Federal Register on 21 November 1979.

Lastly, mention is made here of the publication, in 1978, of the latest in the Commission's series of books documenting the architecture of Washington: *Sixteenth Street Architecture*, Volume I. Illustrated with approximately 600 photographs and drawings, the book documents the architecture and social history of a number of important Washington buildings, both existing and demolished. As with its predecessors, this publication has proven popular with foreign visitors, students, and in general, those interested in the history of the capital city.



THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

A Brief History

1981–1984

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial

One project stands out from all the others reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts from 1981 through 1984—the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The site chosen by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) and authorized by the Congress could not have been a more important one: on the Mall, that space so symbolic of the goals and achievements of the nation, and between two other great memorials there, those to Washington and Lincoln. The nature of the war that brought the memorial into being and the character of the chosen design generated an intense emotional response, one that was clearly evident during the deliberations on the design by the Commission of Fine Arts.

The VVMF, formed and headed by veteran Jan Scruggs, held an open competition for the design, entered by some 1400 persons. The memorial was to acknowledge and recognize the sacrifice of all those who had served and died in the war; it was not to make a statement as to whether the involvement of the United States in the conflict had been right or wrong; it was to be har-



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, original model. Photograph courtesy Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

monious with its site and with the other memorials on the Mall; and it was to be reflective and contemplative in character. After the long process of examining each entry was completed, a winning design was chosen unanimously by the jury; the members described it as “a place of healing. . . a memorial of our own time.”¹ The artist was then identified; she was Maya Ying Lin, a young student of Chinese descent studying architecture at Yale. Her design showed two black granite walls intersecting in a wide V shape. They were set into the earth so that they were level with the ground on top; at each end the earth between them began a gentle downward slope, reaching ten feet at the point of intersection, thus giving each wall a wedge shape in elevation. On the walls were placed the over 57,000 names of those who had died or were missing in Vietnam, in chronological order, beginning at the apex. The listing of the names, somewhere on the memorial, was a requirement of the competition.

As soon as it was made public, the design that was to have avoided any political statement generated controversy. Some saw it as dignified, quietly impressive and noble; others saw it as shameful: black where other memorials were white, below ground rather than rising proudly above the earth.

The Commission of Fine Arts first reviewed the design at its meeting on 7 July 1981. Maya Lin was present to read a statement explaining her approach to the design and her goals. Describing the composition as “a rift in the earth— a long, polished black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth,” she hoped it would be a peaceful, park-like place, a place for “personal reflection and private reckoning”, where the collective and individual loss could be remembered.

There was testimony at this meeting from a Vietnam veteran who not only found the design minimalistic and lacking in nobility, but also hazardous because of the ten-foot drop-off at the apex; he thought it was also inaccessible to the handicapped and posed inherent drainage problems. One of the Commission members, architect Walter Netsch, observed that there would always be multiple opinions on memorials, adding that he personally found it to be not minimal but very effective—modest and at the same time impressive. He acknowledged that there were practical problems that had not been worked out but thought they were capable of solution. The Chairman, J. Carter Brown, thought the design took on the character of nobility because of its quiet strength and its siting between two of the nation’s greatest memorials. The other members made similar assessments, and without dissent, the preliminary design was approved.

The next submission was in October 1981, and it was for approval of granite samples for the walls. By this time a design team had been chosen to work with Miss Lin in executing her design. It was headed by architect Kent Cooper of the Cooper-Lecky Partnership, a Washington firm. Mr. Cooper showed two black granite samples, one from Sweden, the other from India;

¹ “Design Competition: Jury Statement”, VVMF press release.

they were the only ones found that were solid black with no veining, thus permitting the small scale names to be cut into the stone effectively. There were no objections to either sample; ultimately the Indian granite was used.

At this meeting also there were those who spoke out against the design. James Webb, veteran and author of *Fields of Fire*, a book about the Vietnam conflict, submitted a letter for the record in which he characterized the proposed memorial as a “black hole”, a “cave”, a design that presented a “strong nihilistic statement about the war”. He criticized the absence of Vietnam veterans on the jury and the lack of anything tangible on the memorial “denoting the values for which our countrymen fought and died.” He agreed that an inscription, already planned as an addition by the VVMF, would help, but he also asked that a flag be added, preferably at the apex of the wall, and that the color of the stone be changed to white, or, alternatively, that the memorial be set above the ground.

Thomas Carhart, West Point graduate and Purple Heart Vietnam veteran, testified along similar lines. He found the design insulting and demeaning, calling it a “black gash of shame and sorrow”. He considered it based on a political view of the war and asked the Commission of Fine Arts to reopen the competition.

Jan Scruggs, president of the VVMF, said that he, too, had been through experiences similar to those of Mr. Carhart, and he thought the anger aroused by the memorial was really directed at the treatment some veterans had received when they returned home. He noted that the design had been praised by many individual veterans and veteran groups, including the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The Commission members did not think the decision to reopen the competition rested with this agency; they commented, too, that juror involvement in the event being memorialized was not always necessary. The Chairman, recognizing that there were bound to be differences of opinion, recalled the Commission’s previous assessment of the design as one of great dignity and simplicity, and of the site, in close proximity to the Lincoln Memorial, as one of the great ones in the Capital. He spoke of the comments on the modulation of the ground, openness to the sky, and the relationship to the other memorials on the Mall, and he thought that when built, the experience of it would prove to be very moving. He noted the trend away from the traditional type of memorial, whose symbols no longer seemed adequate, and the movement towards a landscape solution.

The following month, November 1981, architect Cooper, accompanied by Maya Lin, presented the results of further study of practical problems related to the design. To prevent those who might approach the memorial from the north from stepping off the ten-foot drop, especially at night, there would be a flat area of turf, extending eleven feet back from the end of the wall, terminating in a black granite curb. Wheelchair approach would be facilitated by a granite path paralleling the walls, and drainage improved by a system of pipes running to a storm sewer; the use of mesh under the sod would further

prevent soggy ground. The members were somewhat skeptical of this method but were assured that it had been used with great success on football fields.

Mr. Cooper said his biggest problem had been to accommodate all the names on the walls. To do this, and not to make the names so small as to be illegible, he proposed lengthening each wall to 246 feet. He said the names would then be .53 inches high, five to a line. He explained the sandblasting technique, whereby the letters would be transferred to the granite through a photographic process and the actual sandblasting accomplished by a mechanical arm. The members were reluctant to increase the length of each wall by nearly fifty feet, but after inspecting the staked-out dimensions on the site, agreed to approve doing so.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, showing relationship to Washington Monument.

At this meeting also, Robert Doubek of the VVMF read to the members the wording of the prologue and epilogue to be added to the listing of names on the wall:

Prologue: In honor of the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order that they were taken from us.

Epilogue: Our nation remembers the courage, sacrifice and devotion to duty and country of our Vietnam veterans. This memorial was built through private donations from the American people. Dedicated November 11, 1982.

In March 1982 the controversy over the design flared up again. The Commission received a letter from Interior Secretary James Watt stating that the VVMF had requested that the memorial be altered to include a flagpole and a statue of a serviceman. Secretary Watt asked to have the Commission's reaction to such an alteration before giving his approval to proceed with construction. The last possible date that would ready the memorial for Veterans Day was fast approaching. The granite was already being quarried in India. At its meeting on 9 March the Commission discussed the request. Robert Doubek, testifying for the VVMF, said he was saddened by the controversy and the charge that the memorial lacked elements symbolic of the sacrifices made by those who fought. To bring about harmony the VVMF had asked Senator John Warner of Virginia to chair a meeting bringing together all factions; out of this meeting had come the request to add a flagpole and a statue. The Commission of Fine Arts, however, had been given no designs to consider. The members were apprehensive about adding any elements to a design whose strength lay in its simplicity; there was a strong possibility that it would be weakened, depending on where the additions were placed, and also that the added elements would appear trivial. A letter to Secretary Watt was drafted at the meeting, saying that the Commission believed it would be possible to add the desired elements, but needed to see something specific before giving any approval. The letter, quoted below, suggested the possibility of a location away from the walls.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have your letter of February 25, seeking the reaction of the Commission of Fine Arts to the concept of the addition on the site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of two elements, a staff with the American flag, and a piece of sculpture depicting a serviceman.

As a design review body, we have difficulty in rendering a judgment without a specific design to review. However, we believe it is possible to find a solution for adding those elements in such a way as to obtain the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts as required by Public Law 26-297.

The Commission has not yet had submitted to it the interpretive element that will welcome the visitor and guide those who are seeking the location of a specific name. Especially for those whose lives

have been affected most by the Vietnam experience, this area will in effect serve as an entry point for visitors to the memorial. The development of this might well provide a fruitful area to examine in relation to the new elements.

The Commission reaffirms its approval for the design as approved to date. As you point out in your letter, the basic design of the memorial is unchanged. For this reason, no further approval by the Commission of Fine Arts is required as a precondition to action by the Department of the Interior. The Commission looks forward to reviewing ways in which additional elements could be designed and positioned so as not to abrogate the integrity and magnificence of the existing design concept, which it will be impossible fully to appreciate until that concept has been realized at its full and very impressive scale.

Sincerely yours,
(signed)
J. Carter Brown
Chairman

By October 1982 the VVMF was ready with a design proposal to add the flag, sculpture, and a name locator to the memorial. In view of the mounting controversy over adding these elements, the Commission decided to open the discussion at the 13 October meeting to all those who wished to testify. For this reason that part of the meeting concerned with the Vietnam Memorial was held in the large Cash Room of the Treasury Department, rather than in the Commission's small conference room.

The discussion began with presentations by the architect, landscape architect, and representatives from the VVMF. As shown on a model, the flag was placed outside the walls, just east of the apex, and the sculpture on axis with it, within the wall enclosure but far back from the apex, near a tree line. The name locator was placed at the end of the western wall, in line with it. Sculptor Frederick Hart then discussed his proposal for the statue, a slightly larger than life-sized portrayal of three servicemen on patrol in Vietnam, a small model of which was in the room. He described it in the words he had used a few weeks earlier, at the time the model was unveiled:

The portrayal of the figures is consistent with history. They wear the uniform and carry the equipment of war; they are young. The contrast between the innocence of their youth and weapons of war underscores the poignancy of their sacrifice. There is about them the physical contact and sense of unity that bespeaks the bonds of love and sacrifice that is the nature of men at war. And yet they are each alone. Their strength and their vulnerability are both evident. Their true heroism lies in these bonds of loyalty in the face of their aloneness and their vulnerability.²

After this presentation, testimony was heard from those in favor of the additions. Twenty-nine people spoke, including Assistant Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, Representative Donald Bailey, Admiral Mark Hill,

² Quoted in *Program Souvenir, National Salute to Veterans, November 10-14, 1982, p. 35.*



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, model of statue in sculptor's studio. Photograph courtesy National Park Service.

General Michael S. Davison, General George B. Price, representatives from veterans groups, and individuals speaking for themselves. Some felt the memorial was not acceptable without the additions; many would accept the original design but thought the flag and statue would bring an added, tangible dimension; others thought the original memorial was only a tribute to the dead, and the sculpture and flag would bring honor to those many veterans who had survived the war.

The last testimony was given by those who opposed the additions; they thought that the integrity and effectiveness of the design would be destroyed by the addition of incongruous elements placed, as proposed, in relatively close proximity to the walls. They felt that the strong verticality of the flagpole, appearing to rise out of the long, horizontal walls, would create a jarring note, and the realistic sculpture would clash with the contemplative, reflective nature of the original design. In their view, the walls themselves, covered with the more than 57,000 names, were sufficient to evoke the feelings of heroism and sacrifice appropriate to a memorial. There were ten witnesses

taking this point of view; in addition to the designer, Maya Lin, they included Robert Lawrence, president and fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Paul Spreiregen, AIA fellow and professional advisor for the competition, Henry Arnold, a landscape architect who had worked on the design of Constitution Gardens (the area in which the memorial was cited), and Michael Straight, former deputy chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

After listening to four hours of testimony, the Commission adjourned to visit the site. Upon returning, the Chairman summarized their conclusions: There would be no objection to the addition of the flag and sculpture to the memorial. The sculpture was thought to be appropriate and moving, but it was pointed out that the maquette was very small and the Commission would want to withhold formal approval until the full size model was seen. A fifty foot flagpole was considered acceptable for the site, but he noted that the Commission would look very hard at any suggestions for more flagpoles on the Mall, there already being a ring of them around the Washington Monument, the focus for the whole Mall composition.

While the additional elements were accepted, their location was not. The Commission agreed with the critics that these elements should not be inserted into the original design. Set within the large area encompassed by the walls, the small sculpture seemed lost and bore little relationship to the flag, placed far away behind the walls. As they looked at the site, the Chairman said, it seemed to the members that the three elements (including the name locator) should be placed in proximity to each other up front, near the southwest entrance to the memorial site. Here they would be more meaningful, have greater impact as an entrance experience, and at the same time not disturb the original design.

Ground had been broken for the memorial in March 1982; the walls and landscaping were completed in the early days of November 1982, and the memorial dedicated on Veterans Day in that month.

The next task of the Commission was to review specific proposals for the placement of the three additional elements. In February 1983 the VVMF presented its recommendation. It was called Scheme A and was based on the suggestions made by the Commission the previous October. The flag was placed at the crossing of two paths at the southwest entrance to the memorial and the sculpture in a glade nearby. In placing the sculpture, care had been taken that the figures looked out towards the memorial but at the same time did not turn their backs on the flag. There was some slight regrading proposed so that the sculpture would be in full view from the paths and from the apex of the memorial walls. On the base of the flagpole was an inscription honoring all those who fought in the war.

Those who had been most unhappy with the original design and most insistent on the additions presented another proposal, called Scheme B. It showed the flag behind the walls directly at the apex and the sculpture on axis with it, in the open ground encompassed by the walls. A third idea, Scheme C, was proposed by a staff member of the American Institute of Architects. It showed



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, showing location of flagpole and statue.

the flag to the west of the walls, on the main path near Henry Bacon Drive and the parking area. The sculpture was placed further south, next to this path.

The Commission listened to presentations from those favoring each scheme, from a representative of the Paralyzed Veterans of America with recommendations for ease of access by the handicapped, and from volunteers working at the memorial who reported comments of visitors and gave their observations on problems of circulation.

The members then discussed the three schemes, with Chairman Brown making the following comments on Scheme B: He said it had an appeal because of its symmetry, but he observed that the elements would never line up unless approached in a strictly axial way. The flagpole would seem to be cut off when looking up from the apex, and because of its location, it would be hard to approach, especially by the handicapped. As a result, the inscription on the base would seldom be seen by visitors. As for the location of the sculpture, Mr. Brown thought that placing it out in the open was wrong because there were no scale-giving elements, and because the size and

monumentality of the walls would destroy the effectiveness of the relatively small piece. The members were unanimously in favor of Scheme A, which would place the sculpture in a prominent place—at the front door—with trees around it to give it scale. The flag, too, would benefit from its placement at the crossing of two paths, where it would become a focal point and its inscription could be easily read.

The discussion then turned to the type and design of the name locator. The VVMF representative said that after much study it had been decided that a simple telephone directory type would be preferable to an electronic name finder; it would be easier to use and less expensive, even assuming frequent replacement.

There would be four books located in the memorial area. The design of the stand to hold the directories was still not considered quite satisfactory, and there was some doubt that the telephone book concept would be durable enough, but it was decided to erect a mock-up of the stand with the directory in place and see how the system worked before giving final approval.

Mr. Netsch said that as further details were submitted, the Commission should give serious consideration to comments made at this meeting about handicapped access and about continuing drainage problems during wet weather. The Chairman agreed and said he was also concerned about lighting—would the memorial be open and lighted at night, and if so—how? He said the Commission would want to look very carefully at any light standards proposed because of the Mall location.

At the opening of the meeting, John Wheeler, chairman of the board of the VVMF, had commented that there had already been a million visitors to the memorial, comparing favorably with visitation to the Lincoln Memorial; he said, too, that the reaction of 95 out of 100 visitors had been favorable. He thought the memorial was accomplishing its mission. As the discussion ended, Commission member Alan Novak said he had noticed substantial agreement this time on the effectiveness of the memorial, even by those who opposed it; he was pleased, too, that much of the rancor noticeable earlier had disappeared.

In April 1983 landscaping and paving plans for the sculpture plaza were submitted, in addition to paths to facilitate handicapped access; circulation patterns, materials, textures, and colors were discussed. Mr. Doubek from the VVMF reported that the directory type name locators had been a great success, and Mr. Cooper showed a modified design for the stands. A representative from the paralyzed veterans organization reported satisfaction with the aids for the handicapped.

As the weather turned warmer that spring, it became evident that more and more people were visiting the memorial at night and lighting would have to be considered. The night before the July meeting, the members inspected a mock-up of a proposed lighting system. There were no standards, only fixtures on the ground illuminating the wall; these lights also served to warn those approaching from the north of the sudden drop-off. The system was discussed in detail at the meeting the following day, with the Commission ex-

pressing enthusiasm for the concept. There were only two concerns: that the lighting should be more even, with less at the bottom and more at the top where the names were farther away, and that the design of the low fixtures should be modified to minimize further the danger of someone stepping backward and falling over them. In September 1983 final plans for both lighting and paving were presented, and with some recommendations, given final approval.

Since the addition of sculpture to the memorial had been approved in October 1982, the Commission had been following the progress made by sculptor Frederick Hart, through inspections at his studio and later at the foundry. In October 1984, two years after the first preliminary approval, Sculptor Hart showed the members slides of the final casting and explained his decision to use a subtle change in the color of the patina given to the bronze to differentiate the various surfaces, such as skin, hair, and clothing. He said the result would be quite realistic, and he realized it would have to be handled very carefully. The members had some misgivings about this technique, and the Chairman said the variations in the patina would have to be very subtle or the abstraction would be lost, and the sculpture would take on the character of a wax-museum piece. It was decided to let the artist proceed according to his own best judgment.

The final finish, as well as the siting of the sculpture, were inspected early in November and satisfaction expressed with the result. Both sculpture and flag were dedicated on Veterans Day 1984 at a ceremony attended by thousands of Vietnam veterans, families, friends and visitors.

The Mall

Several other important projects were reviewed between 1981 and 1984 for locations in the Mall area. The largest was the Smithsonian Institution's addition of two new museums behind the old Castle, which were under construction in 1984. Referred to as the Quadrangle project, the museums will expand the space available for Far Eastern collections and house the new National Museum of African Art. The visible part of these new museum facilities will be two one story pavilions on either side of the south entrance to the Castle: the greater part of the functions—exhibition space, classrooms, offices, and storage—will be housed underground. When this project was first presented (1979-1980), the pavilions bore a strong resemblance to the architecture of the cultures represented by the collections. The Commission was concerned that this would give the grouping a "World's Fair" appearance, and a restudy of the design was recommended.

In September 1981 architect Jean-Paul Carlhian, of Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott, returned with a revised design: the pavilions were Classical in style, designed to complement each other and relate to the sur-



Smithsonian Quadrangle, site before construction, showing mock-up of Renwick gates in foreground.

rounding buildings—the Castle, Freer Gallery, and Arts and Industries buildings—by alluding to the past. The Oriental pavilion, of pale green granite, was shown with six pyramidal roof structures sheathed in copper; its African counterpart would be constructed of pink granite with dome shaped roofs. Architect Carlhian saw the pavilions as unifying elements in the group of Smithsonian buildings and noted also that the vista from Independence Avenue to the Castle would be framed and strengthened. At the Independence Avenue entrance iron gates were shown, based on the original design by James Renwick for the south entrance to the Castle grounds. The two pavilions had their own gardens, with the Victorian garden already existing along the axis of the Castle entrance and Renwick gates retained. The Commission thought the revised design a great improvement, but suggested some simplification of detail and a further moving away from styles having specific cultural references. In December another version, based on these recommendations, was seen and approved. Subsequent to this approval, however, Mr. Carlhian reported that the green granite was not available. After considerable discussion with the architect on the importance of maintaining the contrast between the pavilions, two quite different granites in the pink-rose range were approved.

The landscaping of the Quadrangle underwent several changes during the design process. The early scheme for an oriental garden was abandoned. The Commission felt that as the plans changed, the individuality of the two garden “rooms” was lost and the landscape design weakened. The newer plans were approved, however, in December 1982, subject to suggestions by Mr. Stone and Mr. Netsch that a number of large trees be introduced to give some degree of cohesion.



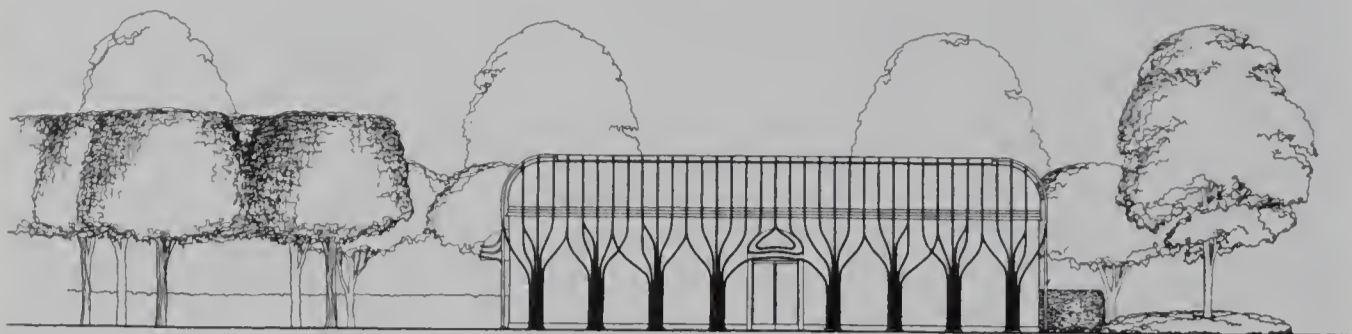
Smithsonian Quadrangle, model of approved design. Photograph courtesy Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott.

The appearance of the Mall will also be altered by the addition of two restaurants. One will be a free-standing structure adjacent to the National Sculpture Garden pool/skating rink. The pool, sculpture garden and restaurant were originally part of the 1965 plan for the Mall; the pool was built in 1972, but the other elements were held in abeyance. The glass and metal restaurant facility, reminiscent of Art Nouveau, was designed by the San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in 1971 and approved at that time (after a severe, rectilinear design had been rejected); it was approved again in January 1984. Landscaping for the sculpture garden was also given preliminary approval at this time, as were the designs for several fast-food and service kiosks.

The second restaurant will be an addition to the Air and Space Museum. Designed by the architect of the museum, Gyo Obata of Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, it will occupy the open space area east of the building, near Fourth Street. The restaurant will be a faceted glass and metal structure, cruciform in shape, with a tubular steel truss roof, recalling the construction used in the main part of the museum.

On the Washington Monument grounds two new walks will be added along the most heavily traveled routes from the reflecting pool to the monument. In looking at this proposal the Commission was concerned primarily with the new grading of the hill on which the monument stands; it also recommended that the walks be slightly recessed from the grass surface to make them less visible, particularly where they curve in near the monument and could appear as elements coming out of the base.

In 1982 the Commission approved the addition of a plaque on the lower



National Sculpture Garden restaurant, architect's drawing. Photograph courtesy Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

terrace of the Lincoln Memorial, which added the names of Alaska and Hawaii to the other state names carved on the frieze of the memorial when it was built.

Lastly, in connection with the Mall, the Commission made on-site inspections and recommendations for changes in the intensity and color of lighting along the Mall walks and drives and in the vicinity of the Smithsonian buildings.

Pennsylvania Avenue

The years 1981-1984 brought great visual change to Pennsylvania Avenue. Projects which were reviewed by the Commission in the preceding four years were completed, and several major new complexes were approved and under construction. Street furniture, lighting, paving, and modifications to street patterns were approved and, for the most part, were in place by the end of 1984. Pershing Park, completed in 1981, was an instant success—a popular place in which to have lunch in the summer and ice skate in the winter. The statue of General Pershing was placed in the memorial area in September 1983.

John Marshall Park, at the eastern end of the PADC area, was reviewed by the Commission and completed during this period; it was dedicated in May 1983. It is on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue at Fourth Street, N.W., on the site of what was formerly John Marshall Place, between the United States District Court and the site for the new Canadian chancery. In December 1984 the Commission reviewed plans to place a statue of John Marshall at the north end of the park; it will be a replica of the one now in the Supreme Court building.

The Canadian chancery was designed by one of Canada's leading ar-

chitects, Arthur Erickson, and promises to be one of the Capital's more distinguished examples of contemporary architecture, complementing I. M. Pei's East Building of the National Gallery of Art diagonally across from it. Symbolizing the importance of the host and guest countries to each other, it will be the first foreign embassy to be located on Pennsylvania Avenue, the great ceremonial street of the nation.

The Commission saw the preliminary design in May 1983 and endorsed it enthusiastically. The representative from the Erickson office discussed the proposal and talked about the elements that had influenced the design—the geometry of the street pattern, the architectural styles and heights of the neighboring buildings, and the views up Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol and across to the Mall. He said Mr. Erickson had been concerned with enhancing John Marshall Park and creating on its west side a building that would complement the United States District Court on the east. He had decided to pick up on the stately theme of columns characteristic of the nearby Classic Revival structures and to tie that theme to the more abstract sculptural qualities of the new National Gallery building across the street. It was explained that while security was a factor to be considered, the program was set up to minimize this visually as much as possible. In fact, the columns, steps, rotunda colonnade, fountain, and general openness were designed to be visually inviting, and it was noted that the building would be open to the public during special events. A monumental courtyard opened onto John Marshall Park, where there was a ceremonial entrance for distinguished visitors; a business



Canadian Chancery, model of revised design. Photograph by Panda Associates, courtesy Arthur Erickson Architects.



Navy Memorial, model of original design. Photograph courtesy Conklin & Rossant.

entrance was located on C Street. The basic material for the building was expected to be limestone.

In December 1984 the Commission saw the final designs. An entrance from Pennsylvania Avenue had been added, and there had been some modifications to the facades, window pattern and shape, and to the penthouse; the Commission thought these changes had improved the design and it was approved, with final details to be seen later.

Other changes in this part of the avenue during 1981–1984 included the relocation of the General George Meade Memorial to a site in front of the United States District Court, and the landscaping of the Mellon Fountain and modification of the Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenue intersection opposite the National Gallery of Art.

The Navy Memorial was one of the more important projects on Pennsylvania Avenue reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts. Located across from the National Archives, it will be within the area known as Market Square, so-called because of its proximity to the site of the old Center Market. The memorial will be an important focal point as it is on axis with the vista between the twentieth-century Classic Revival portico of the Archives building and the nineteenth-century Greek Revival portico of the Portrait Gallery to the north. Also, it lies on the line of Eighth Street, the cross axis of the Mall.

The final design for the memorial was quite different from that first seen by the Commission in February 1982. As first presented by architects Conklin

and Rossant of New York, the dominant element was a very large triumphal arch, placed near the avenue and parallel to the Archives building. The area beneath the arch was to be used as a concert stage for the Navy band; within the structure itself were storage and dressing rooms for the musicians, and in the upper section, a naval museum. The arch was placed in a trapezoidal pedestrian plaza, defined by arcades on the east and west, with large mixed-use buildings (not part of the memorial scheme) behind. There was a tiered seating area for the concerts, and at the northern end, a pool and sculpture with a Navy theme. Sculpture on the arch would also relate to naval history.

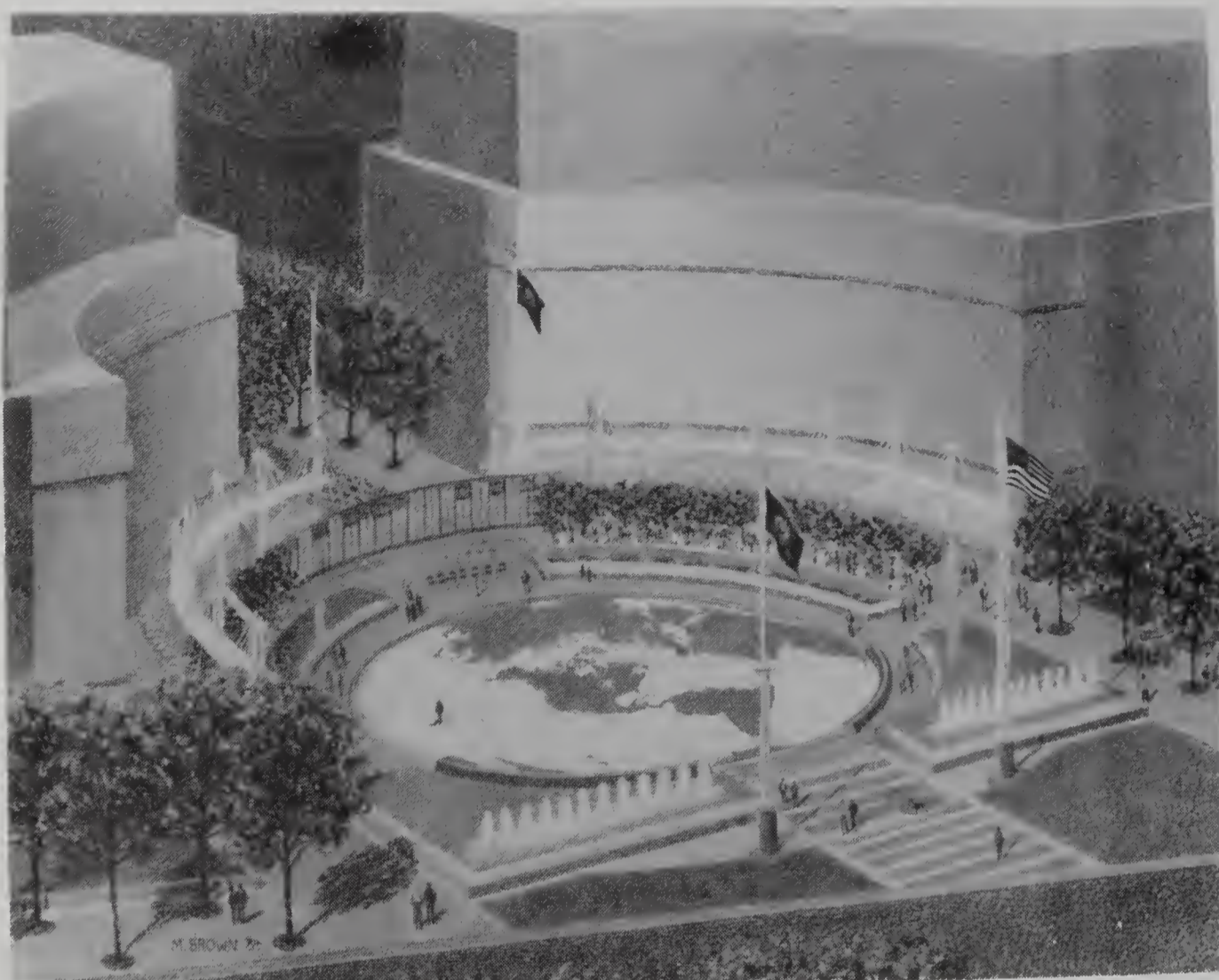
The Neo-Classical arch aroused a great deal of interest and debate. Many thought something more contemporary should be used; others felt the traditional placement for such an arch was across a main thoroughfare, not along it. Some found it too monumental for the site and thought it would block the Archives-Portrait Gallery vista. Several people gave their views at the meeting.

The Commission members present were not totally convinced by the scheme but not ready to abandon it completely. Their doubts centered around the arch—not only its return to a classical style, but its awkward proportions, brought about in part by the number of utilitarian functions placed within. There was also concern about the two large buildings that would eventually flank the plaza: Would PADC set up guidelines for their design so they would bear some relationship to the memorial area? Who would design the arcades—the architect of the memorial or the architect of the private buildings behind? After considerable discussion, the Chairman told the representative from PADC that the scheme needed further study from several points of view and could not be given more than a conceptual approval.

The memorial design also needed the approval of the National Capital Planning Commission and the District's Historic Preservation Board. When the latter group and the staff of the planning commission voiced strong disapproval of the arch concept, PADC withdrew the design.

It was not until July 1983 that the Commission saw a revised design; Conklin and Rossant were again the architects. The arch was gone, the plaza remained but was an elongated semi-circular area with its width related to that of the Archives portico across the street. The band would now sit on steps at the northern end of the plaza, away from the noise of Pennsylvania Avenue. In the center of the area was a raised granite disc, 120 feet in diameter, on which was placed a large sculptured granite wave and a grouping of smaller waves and rocks. North of the band area, the Eighth Street axis was emphasized by a water element flanked by rows of trees framing the Portrait Gallery vista. To the south was a platform for ceremonial purposes with a larger than life-sized statue of a seaman. The disc was flanked on the east and west by curved pools and tables for diners; there were glass colonnades overhead and trees to provide shade. Across Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the Archives was another pool, a long rectangle with water jets rising to the height of the base of the building.

The members all thought that as an urban design scheme it had come a long way. Mr. Netsch, who had been much opposed to the Neo-Classical



Navy Memorial, approved design, architect's drawing. Photograph courtesy the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation.

arch, was especially pleased with this concept. However, no one was very enthusiastic about the sculpture; the huge granite wave in particular was seen as ineffective in evoking the power of the sea.

In October 1983 a simplified design was presented. On the disc, following up on a suggestion made between meetings by Chairman Brown, was inscribed a map of North America and its surrounding seas; around the edge were bronze panels with scenes from naval history depicted in bas relief. The statue of the lone seaman had been retained from the previous scheme. The Commission liked the bas relief panels, and also the map concept, which would relate, on a different scale, to the map of Washington inlaid into Western Plaza, farther along the avenue. Further study was encouraged, with the suggestion made that perhaps more of the world could be shown on the disc to recall historical naval actions outside the North American continent. In January 1984 an azimuthal projection of the whole globe, with Washington, D.C. as its center, was suggested. The apparent distortion of land masses inherent in this type of projection bothered the members, and the PADC representative said further study of methods to correct this problem would be undertaken. A discussion of some refinements to the glass colonnade, the problem of planting trees under such a canopy, and the grading and pattern of pavement in front of the Archives building concluded the presentation at this meeting, with the revised design receiving the Commission's approval.

Just to the east of Market Square, at the intersection of Seventh Street, Indiana and Pennsylvania Avenues, is Indiana Plaza, another of the landscaped spaces in the PADC area. Adjacent to it are several landmark buildings: the late nineteenth-century National Bank of Washington, the Apex Building, and the studios of Matthew Brady, the Civil War photographer. The Commission reviewed plans for the restoration of both the Apex Building and the Brady studios, and for the modern infill structure that connects them. Together they form Sears House, offices for several divisions of Sears, Roebuck and Company. This project, like all other private construction on Pennsylvania Avenue, was reviewed under the Shipstead-Luce Act.

East of these buildings, extending to Sixth Street, will be a large mixed-use development, called the Pennsylvania Triangle. It will consist of two buildings, one residential, the other office; they will be joined by a garden made possible by the closing of C Street in this block. The project was first presented, for informal review, in March 1981, by the Leo A. Daly Company. In March 1982, after architect Jacquelin Robertson had joined the team, a different design was presented. The members thought it a great improvement, but there was concern, in this preliminary presentation, about the massive, bland character of the western facades, the effect on the small landmark buildings in the immediate vicinity, and how the view from the western end of Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol would be changed. A further presentation in July 1983 showed the masses of both buildings broken up by setbacks, a cornice line at the height of the taller of the old buildings, and a variation in material and surface treatment below and above this cornice line; the lower section was shown as limestone, treated in a manner harmonious with the older buildings and the nearby Federal Triangle, while the upper floors were precast concrete and contemporary in style. The members were pleased with the revisions to the design and approved it. Construction began in 1984.

The closing of C Street for the Pennsylvania Triangle project and its development as a garden space prompted the reorganization and landscaping of the open space at Seventh Street, now called Indiana Plaza. Two monuments in the area will be relocated; the Grand Army of the Republic monument will be moved to a spot on axis with the garden along the line of C Street, and the Temperance Fountain placed to the north, near Indiana Avenue. As part of the redevelopment, Indiana Avenue will be narrowed and the sidewalks widened to accommodate an additional row of trees.

Several other large developments along the Avenue were approved by the Commission between 1981 and 1984. National Place was one of these; along Pennsylvania Avenue, across Fourteenth Street from the Willard Hotel, the complex included a Marriott Hotel, an office building, and north on F Street, retail shops. The design concept was approved in July 1980, and in January 1981 material and color samples were presented. A low section of the office building adjacent to the National Theatre was shown as limestone, but the rest of the very large structure, facing Pennsylvania Avenue, was to be dark grey glazed brick, laid with a dark mortar; windows were shown as grey



The Pennsylvania Avenue Triangle, model. In the foreground, two 19th century landmarks: left, the National Bank of Washington; right, the Apex Building, now Sears House. In the extreme foreground: Indiana Plaza and the GAR monument (shown in schematic form only). Photograph courtesy the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation.

glass set in black frames. The architects, Mitchell/Giurgola of Philadelphia, thought a dark plane behind the smaller, light-colored office building and adjacent theatre would give these buildings more emphasis; they also thought such a building would act as a foil to the Willard. The Commission thought that while a dark building of this size might look well in the business district of another city, it was not appropriate for the Capital's ceremonial avenue, where the public buildings are almost exclusively light in color. They also thought that only a small color change was required to differentiate the light colored low buildings from the tall structures behind. In July the members inspected four brick panels on the site; they were in varying shades of grey, all

lighter than the original. The members asked to see another panel; after viewing this panel in September, they gave their approval. The project was completed and opened in 1984.

Another large project, the Cadillac-Fairview development at 1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, was under construction at the end of 1984. It was first seen by the Commission in May 1980, and will eventually cover the block between Tenth and Eleventh Streets, from the avenue north to E Street. In December 1983 design development plans for Phase I were presented by architects Hartman/Cox and given Commission approval. Five old buildings on the site will be incorporated into the new building, which will step down to these structures and also layer back as it goes higher, thus considerably reducing the bulk of this large complex. Material will be limestone and light colored brick.

Across Fourteenth Street from National Place is the turn-of-the-century Willard Hotel, vacant since 1968. Preliminary plans for its restoration and construction of new office space next to it were approved by the Commission in 1979. However, the project underwent a change of developers, and it was not until October 1983 that final plans were reviewed. These were consistent with the preliminary design by architects Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, although they had been developed by a new architect, Vlastimil Koubek. The working drawings for the building and plans for a pedestrian promenade from F Street to Pennsylvania Avenue were approved at this time; construction and renovation began, but were not completed by the end of 1984.

Two other Pennsylvania Avenue projects reviewed in 1979, the office building at 1201 by architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and the renovation of the Old Post Office, diagonally across the avenue, were completed between 1981 and 1984. The Old Post Office has proven to be a very popular place for shopping, dining, and listening to music, and the opening of the tower in 1984 gave tourists and Washingtonians alike a spectacular vantage point from which to view the city.

A master plan for the completion of the Federal Triangle was presented to the Commission in April 1982 by architects Harry Weese and Associates. This plan provided for construction of a large government building in the Great Plaza, completion of unfinished facades, and a general opening up of the Triangle to the public. The preliminary massing study was approved, but no further presentations had been made by the end of 1984.

The Shipstead-Luce Act

In addition to the Shipstead projects already discussed in connection with the development of Pennsylvania Avenue, several others should be mentioned. The area around New York Avenue and Fifteenth Street, N.W., was particularly active. Advocates of the retention of Rhodes Tavern, the 1799 building intended to be demolished for the completion of Metropolitan

Square, lost their battle and the tavern was razed in September 1984. At Fifteenth and G Streets, across from Metropolitan Square, the Washington Building (1925) was scheduled for a face-lifting; plans were submitted by architects Keyes, Condon & Florance for renovation and the addition of one floor and were approved in September 1984. At Fifteenth Street and New York Avenue, the landmark headquarters of National Savings and Trust, built in 1883, underwent restoration; new construction close in style to the original was added to the east and a contemporary office tower erected behind. Architects were Weihe, Black, Jeffries, Strassman and Dove. American Security Bank, on the northwest corner of Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, added two conservatory-like structures to the rooftop of their office building, and on Fifteenth Street, the facade of the old Playhouse Theatre, designed by Paul Pelz in 1907, was used as an entrance to an infill office building behind, designed by Mariani & Associates.

In the fast-changing and developing West End, the Commission reviewed plans for two buildings, both by architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: the headquarters for *U.S. News and World Report* at Twenty-third and N Streets, and opposite it, an office building of similar configuration and design, both part of a master plan for the area. These buildings required Commission review because of their visibility from Rock Creek Park. Another project reviewed for this reason was a new chancery addition to the Japanese embassy on Massachusetts Avenue. Adjustments were made to each of these designs as the result of Commission review.

District of Columbia Government

The Commission reviewed a number of projects for the District government from 1981 to 1984, several of them of special interest. One, the Metro Center development, will bring a major change in the appearance of the downtown business district. It will extend on G Street from Eleventh Street to Thirteenth Street and include the corner site beyond Thirteenth Street, adjacent to Epiphany Church; the project will include a major department store, other retail shops, a hotel, and office space. As it will be built on land acquired by the District as part of an urban renewal, downtown revitalization plan, Commission review was required. Several schemes were proposed for the site in the early 1970's, one of them reviewed by the Commission in 1974, but none materialized. In January 1981 the Commission saw another design, by architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. As presented at that time, the project consisted of three 130-foot-high buildings on G Street and a hotel to the north at Twelfth and H Streets. Drawings showed a plaza at the Twelfth and G Street Metro entrance and a bridge, containing shops, across Twelfth Street. A feature of the design was the ground-level arcade used on all three buildings, as required by the urban renewal guidelines. The Commission gave its approval to the concept with some reservations as to the monumental sym-

metry of the design and to the use of arcades, which the members thought tended to produce dark, uninviting spaces and collect litter. It was also noted that while the bridge across Twelfth Street was considered appropriate to this project, such spanning of streets had generally been discouraged by the Commission in the past.

In March 1983 the project was presented again, this time in a phased version. The office requirements in the city having changed, plans at this time were to build the department store first, then the hotel, and finally, the office buildings. The bridge over Twelfth Street was not shown, and the arcades had been eliminated in agreement with the District government. The facade designs were only schematic and further study was recommended. No further presentations had been made by the end of 1984.

Another commercial project on land marked for urban development was the Design Center, at Fourth Street and Virginia Avenue, S.W., opened in 1981. In this case, an existing nine story brick warehouse was remodeled and an opaque glass and brick addition constructed. Architects were Keyes, Condon & Florance. The Design Center provides showroom space for suppliers of home and office furnishings, and with a Metro stop at the door, has been a successful reuse of a large "white elephant".

Notable, too, during these years was the approval in November 1982 of the design for a new building to house District government social service agencies. Located at the site of a future Metro stop at Fourteenth and U Streets, N.W., it will be the first major project in this redevelopment area, and it is hoped that it will be a catalyst for revitalization. In addition to offices, there will be shops, exhibition space, a cafeteria, and a day care center. Architects were VVKKR and Devroux and Purnell.



The Design Center. Photograph by James Oesch of the Design Center.

A major project, the International Cultural and Trade Center at Maine Avenue and Tenth Street, S.W., was still in the planning stages at the end of 1984. Presented for information only (May 1983), the project was submitted by the Mayor and several federal agencies and coordinated by the Federal City Council. The large complex would include a variety of offices, as well as trade, conference, and education facilities, a State Department training center, and chancery annexes. There would also be a performing arts center, exhibition space, and an international bazaar. The members voiced general support for the concept, which would bring needed activity to this part of the Southwest and link the area with L'Enfant Plaza and the Mall.

Lastly, it should be noted that in 1979, D.C. Law 2-144 established the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board, a District agency that replaced the Joint Committee on Landmarks. The Commission supported the formation of the new local board and continued to work with it on matters of historic preservation in much the same way as it did with its joint Federal/District sponsored predecessor.

Other Projects

In 1981 the Park Service presented plans for a visitor security check facility for the White House, to be located on East Executive Avenue near the East Wing automobile entrance. Because of its close proximity to the White House, the Commission looked very carefully at the proposal. At first it recommended further study to determine if the facility could not continue to be housed in the East Wing, perhaps with an extension of the porte-cochère, rather than erecting a separate building. When this was determined not to be feasible, the Commission agreed to review a new structure, on condition that it be designed as a small pavilion, reminiscent of an orangerie, set into the hillside as much as possible, its design based on the Classical forms of the East wing. It was given final approval in November 1982.

Proposals for alterations to the President's guest facilities at the Blair and Lee houses also came before the Commission. In June 1984 the members approved plans by architects Mesick and Waite for an addition in the garden behind the houses that would provide space for a reception room and a suite for visiting chiefs of state. Plans for renovation of the historic houses were also approved, including exterior modifications that would return the Lee House to its turn-of-the-century appearance and Blair House to the period of Gist Blair's occupancy (1908-42).

The National Zoo presented three projects: new facilities for the monkey and gibbon exhibits and plans for extensive relandscaping. This will include the reworking of the Olmsted Walk through the zoo, placement of concessions and information kiosks, and changes at both the Connecticut Avenue and Rock Creek Parkway entrances.

The Commission continued to review design of coins and medals for the U.S. Mint. Notable during 1981–1984 were a series of gold medallions honoring United States artists, and the commemorative fifty-cent piece celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of George Washington.

Georgetown Waterfront

Georgetown was originally a thriving tobacco port, with a busy waterfront dotted with warehouses, dock facilities, taverns, and shops with living quarters above. With the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in the 1830's, flour milling superseded tobacco shipping as a dominant waterfront activity. Coal shipping, saw mills, an iron foundry, lime kilns—these and other industrial and commercial activities were added as the nineteenth century progressed; by the 1890's, however, the railroad had become the chief method of transporting goods, and Georgetown's importance as a shipping point came to an end. Some industry remained, but by the time Georgetown was declared a historic district, in 1950, the waterfront was shabby, the Whitehurst Freeway darkened K Street, the magnificent view of the river and Theodore Roosevelt Island was partially cut off by a cement plant, and the recreational aspects of the waterfront were for the most part unused.

In the 1960's several planning studies of the area were undertaken and recommendations made, but nothing came of them. At least as early as 1970 the Commission of Fine Arts was urging that the Georgetown waterfront become the last link in the Potomac River park system. In 1973 approval was given to an office building on private waterfront land, but only after it had been scaled down and provision made for uninterrupted public green space along the river. When this project did not go through, the Commission began to press for an all-park solution to the problem of waterfront development.



Georgetown waterfront, 1865. Photograph courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Georgetown waterfront, 1979.

with the Secretary giving frequent testimony at government hearings and citizens' meetings. It was felt that commercial development between M and K Streets was proceeding at such a pace that it was more than ever imperative that the waterfront be kept open and devoted to recreational purposes.

In 1978 Senator Charles Mathias introduced a bill proposing that all land south of the C&O Canal be set aside for park use. When this was unsuccessful, he set up a task force to make still another study of the waterfront. It consisted of representatives from the Department of the Interior, District government, National Capital Planning Commission, Commission of Fine Arts, and the Citizens Association of Georgetown. Its purpose was to come up with a waterfront scheme combining park and development that would bring maximum public benefit with minimum government expense. This was proposed as an option to Senator Mathias's waterfront park bill and the less inclusive recommendation by the Commission of Fine Arts that the parkland extend north only as far as K Street. As the work progressed, it became evident that the task force proposals were becoming architecturally specific, and the Commission of Fine Arts withdrew, believing that further participation would hamper its objectivity when and if the time came to review a design. The Citizens Association of Georgetown also withdrew, because the amount and scale of the development being proposed seemed to them excessive.

The task force completed its work in 1979; on 13 July an agreement was signed by the participants from the Federal and District governments and by representatives of Georgetown Harbour Associates, owners of the private land on the waterfront. In simplest terms, the agreement provided for a strip of public parkland 160 feet wide along the Potomac River, running from Key Bridge to Rock Creek, and a triangular shaped development area between Thirtieth Street and a point midway between Thirty-first Street and Wisconsin Avenue, bounded on the north by K Street. Building heights would range from thirty feet along the river up to sixty feet near the Whitehurst Freeway. Sixty percent of the development was to be residential.

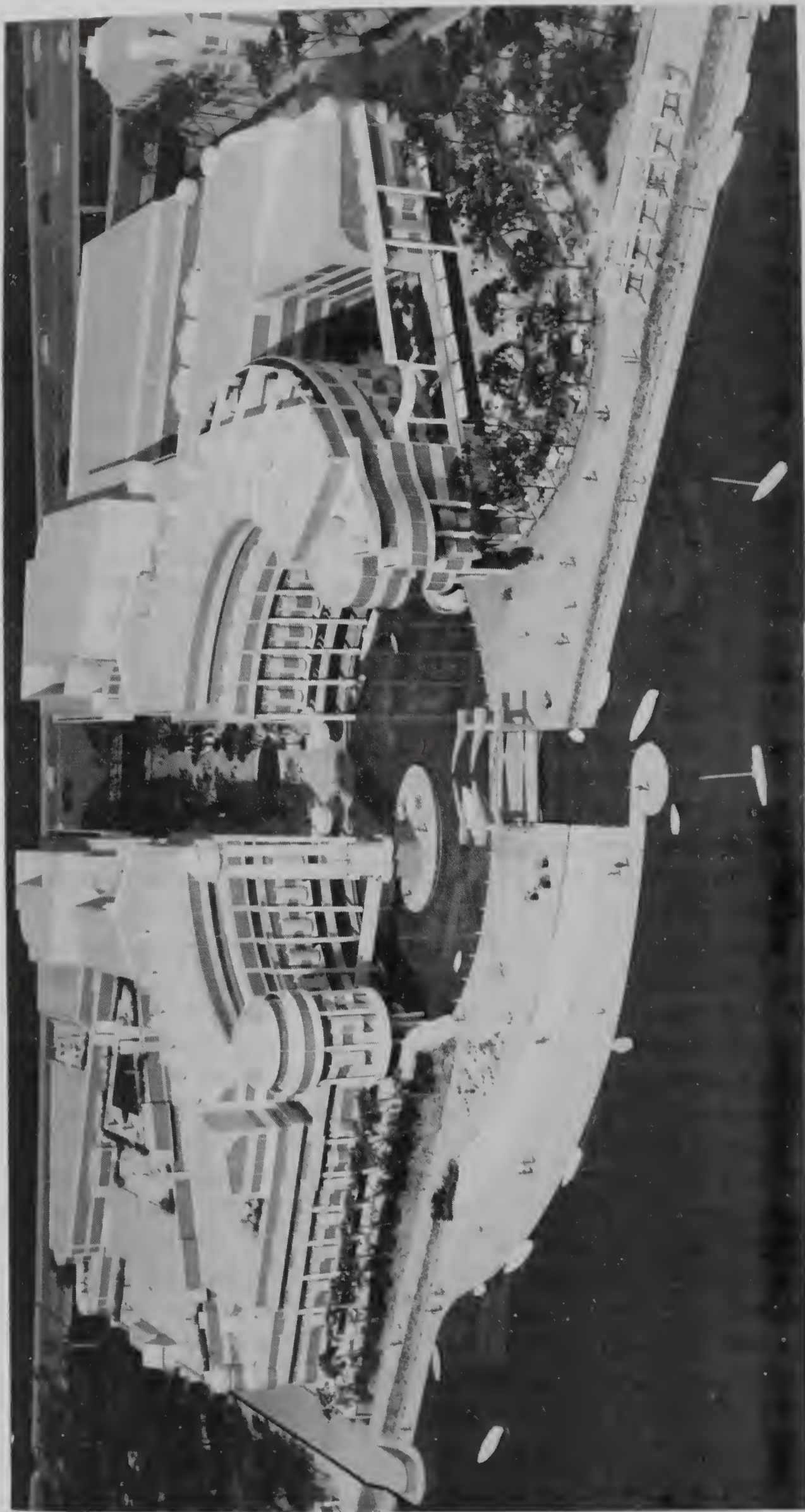
The developer and his architect submitted a design worked out under these guidelines in December 1979. It stretched 1200 feet along K Street, almost

twice the length of any of the larger museums on the Mall, with only narrow pedestrian street openings, affording no more than a glimpse of the river beyond. Its huge size and monolithic character brought immediate disapproval from the Commission.

In March 1980 the developer submitted an entirely new scheme designed by a different architect, Arthur Cotton Moore; it was not based on the task force guidelines, but on matter-of-right zoning. The buildings were confined to the area between Rock Creek and Thirty-first Street with the existing public street rights-of-way, including the diagonal line of Virginia Avenue, cut through the project to break up its mass. These streets were kept at their normal width, thus preserving the views from the north part of the historic district down to the river and keeping the traditional block concept of Georgetown. The focal point was an elliptical boat basin at the foot of Thomas Jefferson Street, punctuated by a tower. The development included residential, commercial, and office space, with heights ranging from thirty-five feet for a townhouse development along Rock Creek to sixty feet for the mid-rise sections, and up to eighty-six feet for the tallest element on K Street. Stylistically, the project exhibited a *mélange* of modern and classical elements, with frequent use of towers, domes, and curved shapes, including a crescent enclosing the boat basin. Park area on the developer's land was limited to a fifty-three-foot-wide strip along the river, with public access through the project provided by the pedestrianized street rights-of-way. The suggestion was made that the best place to develop a true public park was on the District's waterfront land, between Thirty-first Street and Wisconsin Avenue.

Many people were present at the meeting and asked to speak for or against the development. Those in favor thought it was attractive, would bring life to a run-down, shabby part of Georgetown, and with no funds available to purchase the land for park use, was the best that could be expected; it would also bring tax revenues and jobs. Those in opposition stressed that every effort should be made to keep this exceptionally beautiful section of the Potomac open for all citizens to enjoy; they mentioned several bills introduced in Congress to effect Federal purchase of land. They noted that Georgetown had already reached the saturation point as far as development was concerned, and that this project would be built on a floodplain, against Federal directives.

The Commission found the design a vast improvement over the one seen previously, although still too high and bulky. The Chairman commented that the Commission had consistently recommended a sixty-foot maximum height for the waterfront, a recommendation that had been followed by all other developers in the area. The members thought the site plan for the new project was very good, because of the breaking up of the masses and preservation of the north-south views through the retention of the street rights-of-way. They liked the public access and found the boat basin attractive, a reminder of the old port that once existed. However, they still felt strongly that nothing except small-scale buildings associated with recreational use should be built on this important site; the Chairman told the developer that the project was being



Washington Harbour project, model. Photograph courtesy Arthur Cotton Moore/Associates.

reviewed only because the possibility of keeping the area solely for park purposes was still uncertain.

The Commission saw the project again the next month, when the principal change was a twenty-foot reduction in height of a section along K Street. As before, there were a large number of people who asked to comment.

The Commission continued to review the design, at the request of the District government, although continuing to state its preference for an all-park solution. If the Commission had refused to review the project, the developer could have done what he wanted, within zoning regulations; the result would undoubtedly have been a higher and more bulky project than one that had gone through Commission review, and it was likely that there would have been fewer public amenities.

When the time came for a final decision, in March 1981, the Commission membership was largely changed from what it had been when the project was first seen, just a year earlier. Still, the vote was to disapprove the development on the basis that its size and bulk were incompatible with the historic district. It was not a unanimous vote; two members, Sondra Myers and Alan Novak, voted for approval, stating that it was a difficult decision, but with no Federal or District money available for purchase of the land, this development with its several attractive features seemed the best alternative. In his comments Mr. Novak urged that the Commission continue to press for binding evidence that promises of park development of the rest of the waterfront would be carried out by the District government and the developer. In his letter transmitting the Commission's action to the District, the Chairman expressed the members' concern over this matter, a concern stated previously in letters written in April and October 1980.

In April the vote was reaffirmed, after the project was submitted again at the request of the developer and more arguments heard. Then the developer requested a public hearing under the District's historic preservation law. At this hearing, 29 June 1981, a statement on behalf of the Commission of Fine Arts was made by Chairman J. Carter Brown. It said, in part:

The disapproval was not based on the quality of the architectural design; rather, it was based on the recognition that even a well-designed building, on the wrong site, must be considered unacceptable. This is particularly true when the site is within a historic district, and even more critical when it is also directly on the Potomac River, with its major scenic and historic importance for the Nation's Capital.³

In September, after reviewing the testimony and evidence presented at the hearing, the Mayor's agent gave her findings: the project was not incompatible with the historic district and could proceed. Building permits were subsequently issued, although no binding commitments had been made by those involved in the future development of park areas.

³ Statement of J. Carter Brown, Public Hearing HPA 81-244, 3020 K Street, N.W., 29 June 1981; *Minutes*, 7 July 1981, Exhibit 1.

The waterfront project, as reviewed by the Commission in 1980 and 1981, showed a townhouse or low retail development on the land bordering Rock Creek, although it was considered part of a later phase of the project and was not reviewed in detail. Even this low scale development would have required some accommodation with the Park Service, which had a twenty-foot easement on the land. But in January 1984, a hotel and an office building, each seven stories in height, were proposed for this site and submitted to the Commission for review. Arthur Cotton Moore was again the architect; the applicant was Rosewood Hotels, Inc., under an agreement with Washington (formerly Georgetown) Harbour Associates. Mr. Moore said that rather than conform strictly to the existing easement and build a twenty-foot-high building on the entire site, right to the banks of Rock Creek, it had been decided voluntarily to set the construction back forty feet from the creek and add this amount to the allowable twenty-foot height, making a sixty-foot-high building. If the Park Service would permit this, Mr. Moore said the developer would landscape both sides of the creek bank (the east side being Park Service land), build bicycle and pedestrian paths along the creek and a bridge across it, and also landscape the Mole, Park Service land once used for docking, just south of the proposed hotel between the creek and the Potomac River. Drawings of the two buildings showed them to be similar in style to the adjacent waterfront project. They were separated by the pedestrian extension of Virginia Avenue and here, on both buildings, were tower elements seventy-six feet high, creating a monumental gateway effect. The towers curved back and became sixteen-foot-high penthouses.

As with the other waterfront project, there were many people present to testify for and against the development. Those in favor thought the hotel and the improvements to the banks of Rock Creek would be an asset to Georgetown; those opposed objected to further intensive development on the waterfront, especially along Rock Creek because of its importance as the beginning of the Rock Creek park system, and its historical connection to the C & O Canal. They thought the twenty-foot height easement held by the Park Service was there for good reason.

The Commission members questioned the Park Service representative about the easement and were told that it had come about in 1941 in a complicated exchange between the C & O Canal Company and the B & O Railroad and was the result of the desire of the Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission to keep development on the creekside property low. He said that the Park Service was engaged in the process of public hearings relating to the possible lifting of this easement in exchange for public access and improvements to the creek banks and Mole area by the developer.

The members then discussed the design, noting first that the easement question and its financial aspect—the value received by the government from any exchanges—would have to be worked out by the Park Service and the developer. As far as the design was concerned, they found it too high and bulky for the park environment; they were especially critical of the tall gateway elements and the concept of the gateway itself, which would drive the

Virginia Avenue axis visually right into Georgetown, diminishing the screen of trees that gave the creek side its secluded charm. Edward D. Stone, Jr., the landscape architect member, thought the buildings should be moved farther back from the creek, but he and the other members looked favorably on the plans for landscaping and public access. The Chairman said that this was about as far as the Commission could go at this preliminary stage, but if asked to make a decision, it would disapprove the project on the basis of the drawings and the model seen.

In June the project was presented again. Several modifications had been made in response to the Commission's criticisms. The height of the hotel had been reduced by one floor, tower elements and penthouse removed, and the actual footprint of both buildings reduced along the creek. A glass conservatory connected the buildings, further reducing the gateway effect at Virginia Avenue objected to in the earlier scheme. A representative from the Park Service told the members that his agency had been working with the developers on various exchanges and commitments to public access since January and was now in full approval of the project as presented; he said the Park Service could be considered a co-applicant. The Commission members, too, were pleased with the response to their recommendations. In his general comments on the project, the Chairman observed that the all-park concept for the waterfront had been lost when the first, and much larger, development had been allowed to proceed. Now, he said, the waterfront had become an urban environment and the issues of importance, as far as this site was concerned, were controlling the height and bulk of the proposed construction and making sure that the deteriorating banks of the creek were stabilized and landscaped, and that public access along them was assured. The members noted that many of the promises made by the developer regarding public access, landscaping, and money to help construct a public park on the District's waterfront land had been made when he was seeking approval for his first project; however, they had not been made binding when the permit was issued. Also, there was as yet no guarantee that the District would transfer its land between Thirty-first Street and Wisconsin Avenue to the Park Service for development as a park. Therefore, the Chairman suggested that a vote be taken and approval of the design made contingent on proof that commitments made by the various parties involved would be carried out, that easement and maintenance agreements would be binding on current and future owners, and on assurance that the Park Service was obtaining equal value for the concessions it was making. On that basis, the preliminary design was unanimously approved. No further submissions were made during 1984.



Jefferson Court, architect's drawing. Photograph courtesy Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Other Georgetown Projects

Development continued on the waterfront with the construction of another major office building, Jefferson Court, at 1025 Thomas Jefferson Street. Unlike the others built in the 1976–1980 period, however, it took its design cue from the late Victorian period seen so frequently in Georgetown, specifically the Romanesque Revival. Architects were Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

At the end of 1984, the Corcoran School development was under construction at M and Twenty-eighth Streets. Based on the renovation of this late Victorian school and its conversion to office use, the project as designed by Arthur Cotton Moore Associates also included an office building with Victorian details and, near the park, a townhouse development.

Further west on M Street, the extension of Georgetown Park shopping mall and the renovation and restoration of the historic Market House building were approved in 1984. In this project the Commission was insistent that the old market, built in 1865, keep its architectural character and its integrity as a free-standing building. Architects were Stinson-Capelli and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Away from the commercial district, in the northernmost part of Georgetown, lies Dumbarton Oaks, with its historic house and extensive gardens, and the Byzantine and Pre-Columbian art museums. In 1983 the Commission reviewed and approved a small addition in the courtyard of the Byzantine galleries to house a new collection. Hartman/Cox were the architects.

Georgetown University's building program was very active from 1981 to 1984. A master plan, which included student dormitory housing behind Healy Hall



Georgetown University student townhouse accommodations. Photograph by Robert Lautman, courtesy Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA.

and a large, terraced development occupying the hillside behind the medical center, was approved in April 1984. Subsequently, designs for the housing and some elements of the terraced development were approved. The latter development, when completed, will include parking garages, university space, and playing fields. Architects were Mariani & Associates. Earlier, in 1982, the Commission had approved student townhouse accommodations designed by Hugh Newell Jacobsen.

Kevin Roche, member of the Commission of Fine Arts from 1969 to 1980, was the recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1982. The award was presented to him at a ceremony in Chicago on 19 May 1982.

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

A Brief History

1985-1990

Memorials

The question of the proliferation of memorials in the city of Washington, particularly in the Mall area, and the review of designs for several specific memorials, occupied a large part of the Commission's time from 1985 to 1990.

In April 1985, the National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee published amended guidelines and criteria which noted that there were already 106 monuments, memorials and plaques in the historic L'Enfant city, and that only about fifty suitable locations remained. At the rate that legislation authorizing memorials, particularly military memorials, was being introduced in Congress, the committee was fearful that the limited number of sites would be exhausted in a short period of time. Accordingly, the guidelines recommended, in part, "limiting the use of the few remaining sites to memorialization of events of national or international significance . . . and to memorialization of persons of exceptional national or international significance. . . ." Military memorials would be "limited to a specific war which relates to a major combat operation or branches of service of the Armed Forces. . . ." The Commission of Fine Arts (whose Chairman was designated an official member of the committee at its inception) endorsed the guidelines wholeheartedly, having held the same views for some time.

To give these guidelines added strength, Congress passed the Commemorative Works Act in 1986 (Public Law 99-652). The law provided that all commemorative works proposed for the District of Columbia and its environs on federal land be authorized by an act of Congress and erected in accordance with the memorial legislation. The national capital region was divided into two parts: Area I, essentially the Mall area, or what is known as the monumental core; and Area II, those areas outside Area I. As first introduced, the legislation prohibited any future memorials in Area I; the Commission of Fine Arts and other agencies thought this too extreme; the law as passed allowed those of "preeminent historical and lasting significance to the Nation", if specifically authorized by Congress. The National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee was retained to advise on commemorative works; although redesignated the National Capital Memorial Commission, it remained an interagency organization, structured as before. Those authorized to erect a memorial were required to consult with the commission and submit site and design proposals

to the Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Secretary of the Interior (or Administrator of the General Services Administration, as appropriate) for approval.

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed designs for a number of memorials from 1985 to 1990, most of them authorized before the passage of the Commemorative Works Act. A memorial to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, designed by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, was approved in 1979 but not built because of lack of funds. It was presented again in April 1990. Basically a landscape rather than an architectural solution, the memorial comprised a series of four, granite-walled "garden rooms", stretched along a nearly 900-foot site in West Potomac Park near the Tidal Basin. The rooms were symbolic of the Four Freedoms and the various periods in the President's life, the story being told through inscriptions and bronze bas-relief sculpture on the granite walls. There were numerous water features and landscaping (see photograph, p. 120). The visitor entered the memorial from the Potomac side, along a wide paved path, lined with trees, on axis with the Washington Monument; circulation was along an extension of the granite-paved floor of the four rooms to an amphitheatre next to the Tidal Basin in the midst of the cherry trees.

Over ten years had passed since the design had been approved. The membership of the Commission had changed, and the perception of memorials in Washington had changed. The members had questions for Mr. Halprin regarding the great size of the memorial, including the monumental scale of the entrance path, as well as the large amount of paving and the hard-edged appearance of the memorial as a whole as it would interrupt the soft, meadow-like character of the site. There were questions about the amount of berming behind the walls, and the way it cut the visitor off from any sense of the Potomac River beyond. Mr. Halprin agreed to restudy his design in terms of the comments made.

Two months later he returned to make a second presentation. Significant changes had been made: The entrance path was much reduced in size and turned 90 degrees, so that the meadow-like character of the area was not broken; the size of the visitors' center was reduced by one-half, and it was placed in an unobtrusive location near the entrance; the amount of paving was reduced by almost one-half; the berm was softened by more natural grading and the use of more plant material; and a grilled opening in one of the rooms provided a view through to the Potomac River. A major change was the retention of the Tidal Basin roadways west of the memorial which would have been eliminated in the earlier scheme.

In general, the Commission was pleased with the response. The Chairman thought that further tampering could adversely affect the most important element, which was the physical sequence of time. He described the design as a historical drama depicted in a garden setting, one that should not be viewed as a two- or three-dimensional plan but a four-dimensional experience in time, the success of which would depend in part on the abundance and maturity of its landscaping. Ms. Chatfield-Taylor was still concerned about the effect



Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, plan approved by The Commission of Fine Arts, June 1990.

of the hard-edged design on the natural setting, and because the success of the memorial would rest on the quality of the detailing and sculpture, and the maintenance of the landscaping, she asked that the Commission be given assurance that the construction budget would meet the requirements and an appropriate maintenance fund would be established. A vote was taken on the basis of the comments made, and the revised design was approved, with Ms. Chatfield-Taylor abstaining.

Another major memorial, on a site close to the Washington Monument grounds and the Mall, was the Holocaust Memorial Museum. Legislation in 1980 created the Holocaust Memorial Council and authorized the site: south of Independence Avenue, between 14th and 15th streets and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and the Auditors Building. Originally, the museum was to be housed in two turn-of-the-century brick buildings on the site. They had seemed particularly appropriate, as they recalled the structures in the internment camps where Jews had suffered under Nazi tyranny. Later, however, it was determined that the buildings were inadequate for the program and they were demolished. A new building was designed by architect George Notter and shown to the Commission of Fine Arts in May 1985. The members had serious concerns about the design; they found it too large, too assertive in the way it projected out in front of the flanking buildings, and too severe and foreboding in its style. Member Alan Novak commented that it "spoke more of muscle than of soul." Two members of the public asked to testify: One criticized the razing of the two old buildings without design review; the other stated that the old buildings had an emotional quality suitable to the subject, whereas the new design would turn people away.

The following month a second submission was made; the museum was smaller, lower, and set back from 15th Street in line with the adjacent buildings. It was still a very large structure; efforts to soften it with abundant planting had not removed the aggressive, foreboding look. The 14th Street facade was especially troublesome in this regard.

In May 1987 the Holocaust Memorial Council presented a completely new design by architect James Freed, of I. M. Pei & Partners. The new director of the council, Arthur Rosenblatt, said the design had been unanimously approved and found to be deeply moving. In discussing his proposal, Mr. Freed said he had been asked to design something that would be compatible with the other buildings in the area. He added that he thought the previous concept was too large, and it was agreed that the new design could be somewhat smaller.

Mr. Freed observed that the flanking buildings were quite different in character: The Auditors Building was a red brick Victorian structure of moderate size, and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing was a very large building of light-colored limestone, classical in style. Also in the area were the Washington Monument, an austere white obelisk, and the domed, white marble Jefferson Memorial. Accordingly, he had made the basic building limestone, picked up on the style and color of the Auditors Building by using reddish brick towers, and placed a hexagonal memorial structure on the west facade to break up

the building line, provide a distinctive design element, and tie in with the nearby monuments. The memorial structure would house the Hall of Remembrance, the spiritual, contemplative part of the building; the bulk of the construction would be devoted to exhibition space, libraries, an auditorium, cafeteria, offices, and various service facilities.

The chief concern of the members was the Hall of Remembrance. As it projected beyond the line of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, it became a dominant urban design element, especially when looking down 15th Street from the north. How dominant it would be was to some extent a function of whether another Treasury Department building, on 15th Street in front of the Auditors Building (known as Annex 3), would be retained or demolished. The character of the Hall of Remembrance, especially its blank walls and blind windows and doors, also caused concern. With regret the Commission disapproved the new design.

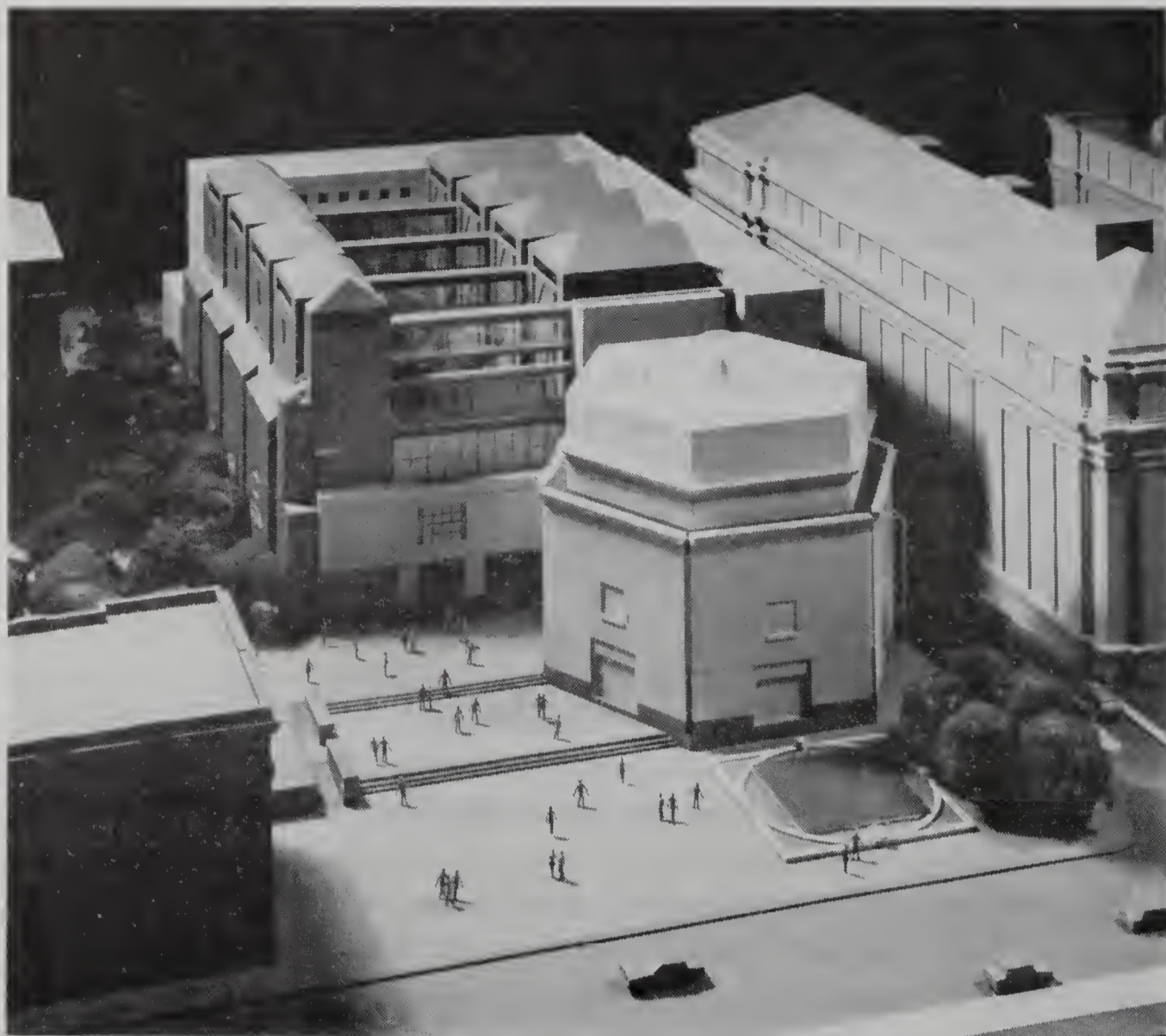
The next month a revised version was submitted. The architect had been able to reduce the above-grade building volume by ten percent and pull back the memorial structure so that it projected only slightly beyond the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

There were several people present who asked to testify. Their comments addressed not so much the design as the question of the museum's appropriateness to the Mall area and whether it truly represented a part of American history. Philosophical questions were also asked: Could an experience of such horror as the Holocaust ever be expressed by exhibits placed in a building? Who would be memorialized? The inappropriateness of allowing donors' names to be used was also brought up. Several of the speakers who had grave doubts about the museum were themselves survivors of the Holocaust.

The Chairman thanked those who had shared their views, reminding them that the Commission's role was limited to review of the exterior design elements and the urban design aspects of the building as it related to the capital city. Within these limits, the members approved the design concept, subject to review of details and proposed materials.

As the design developed, some changes were made to the 14th and 15th Street facades in response to the commission's recommendations, and the plans for the landscaped plaza along 15th Street were approved.

The memorial continued to draw public comment. The design was criticized as evocative of the brutalization of the human spirit, with the request that it be restudied so that it would make a more positive aesthetic contribution to the city. The possible demolition of Annex 3 was of concern to others, including the Committee of 100 on the Federal City and the D. C. Preservation League. A member of the Museum Development Committee of the Holocaust Council acknowledged the need for maintaining a careful balance between expressing the horror of the Holocaust and providing an appropriate appearance for a building located so near the Mall.



Holocaust Memorial Museum; model, showing 15th Street elevation. Photograph by Eric Schiller, courtesy Pei Cobb Freed & Partners.

By March 1988 the Commission of Fine Arts was satisfied with the design, except for the Hall of Remembrance, which continued to trouble some of the members because of the blind windows and doors, which seemed unnecessarily foreboding. The architect then recalled the long tradition of using these elements in classical architecture, and he pointed out that true windows would not be appropriate, given the contemplative nature of the space and the fact that the walls would contain niches for candles. He noted that the interior would be amply and dramatically lit by a skylight and full height slits of glass at the corners. The Chairman said he was not bothered by the blind windows, considering them effective poetic elements, relieving what would otherwise be grim blank walls. To him the Hall of Remembrance was an inward-looking building, one that had to be experienced by going inside.

The question of the demolition of Annex 3 was then brought up. It was thought that since all the design decisions had been made on the assumption that the building would remain and play its role in cupping the space and making the entrance more inviting, the approval of the final design should be made contingent on its retention. As some members still had reservations

about the Hall of Remembrance, it was requested that the architect consider these and respond at the next meeting.

In April 1988, Mr. Freed returned with a version that showed the blind windows and doors in stone, rather than in the original brick, satisfying those who had objected previously. Assurances were received from the Holocaust Council that the current members had no intention of requesting the demolition of Annex 3; they noted that they could not speak for their successors, but pointed out that the building was a registered landmark, and a full inquiry by the Federal Advisory Council for Historic Preservation would be required if the subject were reopened. With that understanding, the vote for approval was unanimous; further architectural and landscaping details would be seen later. As it happened, the Holocaust Memorial Council was granted use of Annex 3 for an administrative center; plans for its renovation and restoration were approved in July 1990.

Several military memorials were approved by the Commission between 1985 and 1990. The Armored Forces Memorial, approved in 1987, will be erected in one of the niches along Memorial Drive, leading to Arlington Cemetery. Legislation authorizing it was passed before the Commemorative Works Act; this law now prohibits memorials to individual military units in Washington and its environs. Arlington Cemetery was not included in the restricted area, and in January 1990, the Commission approved a memorial to the Third Infantry Division for a site in the cemetery near the Amphitheatre. The simple obelisk was designed by Francis Lethbridge, architect for the new Arlington Cemetery Visitors Center.

Outside the United States, the Commission approved a design for a small memorial in Guadalcanal, commemorating World War II action there and in the Solomon Islands. The memorial, approved in 1987, was based on a prototype memorial marker approved by the Commission a number of years ago.

The sites for two military memorials were approved in 1988. One will honor all women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces; the other will be dedicated to veterans of the Korean War. Both are to be erected in compliance with the Commemorative Works Act.

The women's memorial will be located in the Memorial Gate area at the entrance to Arlington Cemetery and will include the badly-needed restoration of the Great Hemicycle. The Commission was enthusiastic about the site, at the same time recognizing that the design must be handled with great sensitivity to the existing cemetery entrance elements, designed in the 1920s by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White. In December 1988, a competition for the design was announced in a ceremony at the site, and in November 1989, the winning design was selected.

The Commission reviewed and approved a site for the Korean War Memorial in September 1988. It was in Area I, to the southeast of the Lincoln Memorial, in an area known as Ash Woods. Because of the location in Area I, the site required special congressional approval, granted because of

the “preeminent historical and lasting significance to the nation”. The design for this memorial was also determined through a competition.

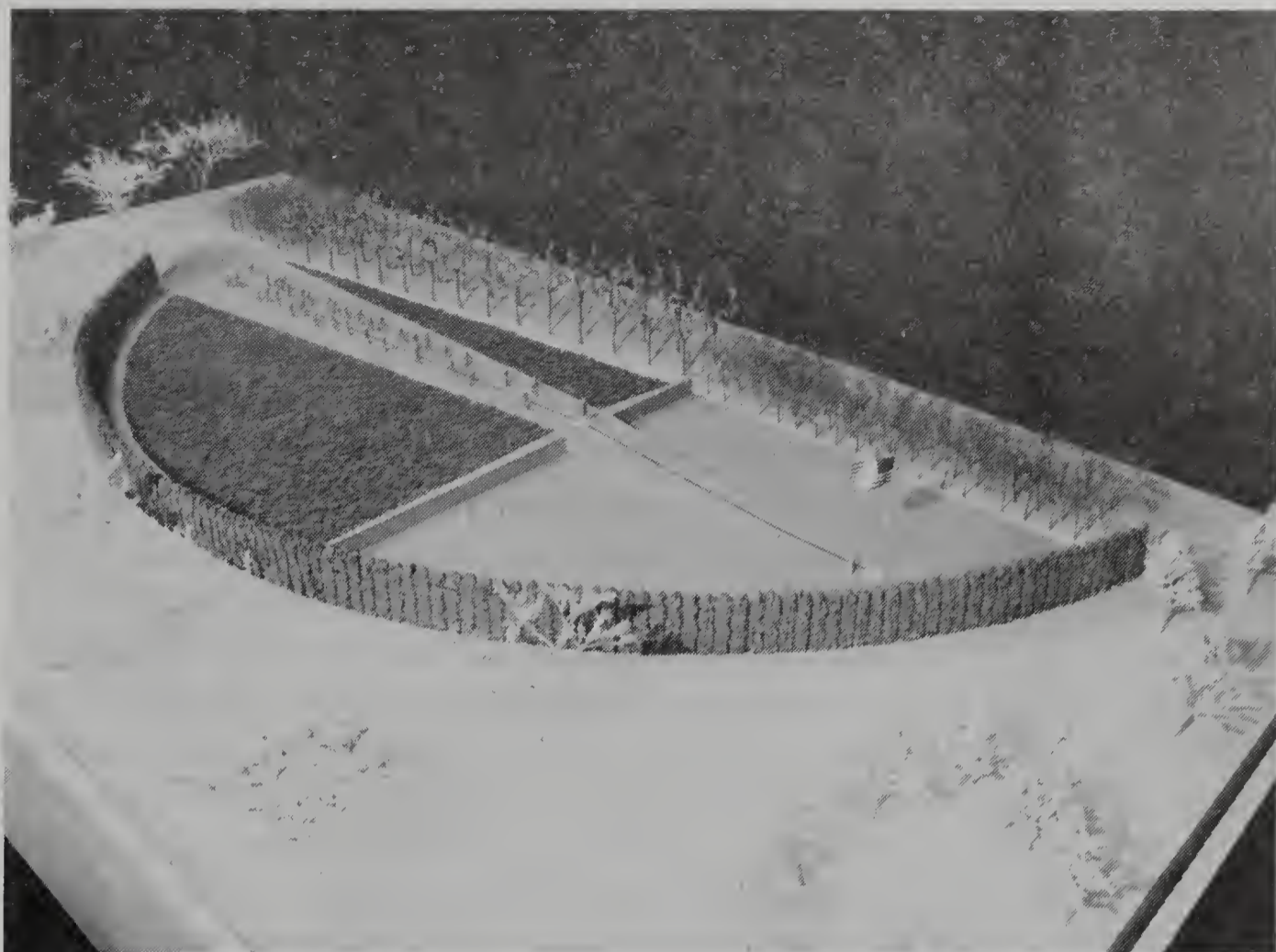
The Korean War Memorial legislation provided for a twelve member board to select the design. The board was also the jury, although it was assisted in its selection duty by five, non-voting professional consultants, including architects and sculptors.

In July 1989 the Commission of Fine Arts saw the winning entry and listened to General Richard Stilwell (USA Ret.), chairman of the board, discuss the statement of concept that had been given to all competitors. The major points were that the Korean War had been waged in the cause of freedom, and unlike the Vietnam War, there had been a victory in geo-political terms. Although the memorial would be American, it would pay homage to all those who had participated, including those from the United Nations forces.

The winning design was the work of a team of architects and landscape architects from State College, Pennsylvania: Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Alvaro Leon, John Paul Lucas, and Eliza Pennypacker Overholtzer.

Ms. Lucas explained the design concept to the members. She said the site would complete the cruciform plan of memorials on the Mall, complementing the Vietnam Memorial on the other side of the Lincoln Memorial/Washington Monument axis. She explained that as one approached the site, the figures of thirty-eight statues of marching foot soldiers, over seven feet tall, would be seen in the distance, recalling the repetitive image of long lines of men moving across the Korean landscape during the war. At the memorial entrance, the visitor would begin the walk along an ascending ramp, about 300 feet long, flanked by the soldiers, seemingly marching through “a landscape symbolic of war”. This effect would be achieved by setting the statues in rushing water, flanked on either side by fields of barberry bushes, with plane trees pruned in tortuous shapes defining the memorial area on the Mall side. At the top of the ramp, pools of still water, signifying the end of the war, would be followed by a shorter ramp descending to a paved plaza with the American flag on axis and the Washington Monument in the distance. Looking back, the visitor would see a wall with inscriptions and sketches recalling the various activities associated with combat, depictions of the country and people of Korea, and a reminder that twenty-one nations had participated in the conflict. At one end of the wall an alcove would commemorate the dead and missing, and those who were prisoners of war. The emphasis in this part of the memorial would be on the end of the struggle and the prospect for peace. The landscape would change accordingly, with dogwood trees defining the Mall boundary, and arborvitae and a stone seating bench edging the arc-shaped walk at the southern boundary of the memorial which would take the visitor back to the entrance area.

The members congratulated the design team on the sensitive way in which the concept had been handled, and then discussed the questions they had, as well as others that had been raised by the Park Service and the Memorial Advisory Commission. Some of the questions were technical—how to keep moss and algae from growing in the water, where to place the circulating



Korean War Memorial; model, competition-winning design. Photograph courtesy Burns Lucas, Leon, Lucas, Architects.

pumps, and how to maintain the thorny barberry and the pruned plane trees. Others were concerned with elements of the design — how to enforce the one-way traffic circulation, how to keep the memorial from being too walled-off from the rest of the Mall, and how to soften the plaza area, which, with its great amount of granite paving, seemed unnecessarily harsh. Elements of the landscaping were also questioned, especially the dogwood, because of a blight that was spreading rapidly in the Washington area, and the arborvitae, because it looked too stiff; holly was suggested instead. Questions were asked also about the sculpture — the advisability and even the possibility of one person doing all thirty-eight statues. At the end of the discussion, it was agreed that the concept could be approved, but there were many details of the design that needed more study.

In December 1990 the Commission saw a revised design. In the intervening time, the Korean War Memorial Advisory Board had hired an architectural firm, Cooper-Lecky Associates, to produce the working drawings and supervise construction of the memorial, making any necessary adjustments to the design as the details were developed. The firm had performed a similar function for the Vietnam Memorial. A sculptor, Frank Gaylord, had also been selected, and by late 1990 had already produced clay maquettes of the thirty-eight soldiers. It was agreed that the sculptural material would be

aluminum or white bronze, rather than granite, because of the ease of working in metal and the ability to produce more detail.

When the members first saw the revised design, they were surprised at how much it had changed. The line of figures no longer ran parallel to the Reflecting Pool, but on a diagonal, making a visual connection between the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials. The line terminated in a flag plaza, then a curved wall angled off toward the Reflecting Pool; on the wall would be inscriptions and pictorial recognition of the various support troops. The visitor then entered a commemorative grove, where the dead and missing were honored, before leaving the memorial on the Mall path system. The fields of barberry, tortured trees, and the arc of arborvitae screening the figures from Independence Avenue had been eliminated. The landscaping was softer, more in keeping with Constitution Gardens on the other side of the Reflecting Pool, and berming and trees were used to screen the line of soldiers from the avenue.

Architect Kent Cooper said he had not intended to alter the original design to this extent when he began trying to address the concerns of the various reviewing agencies and the Korean War Memorial Board, whose members had been very pleased with the concept of the line of soldiers, but less enthusiastic about other aspects of the competition-winning scheme. He said it was when he started working with the circulation problem that the design really began to change. It was noted that the landscape architecture firm that had won the competition had declined to work with Mr. Cooper in making changes to their design.

Representatives from this firm then asked to present their response to criticisms made by the Commission at the July 1989 meeting. They stated first that they considered Mr. Cooper's design a totally new concept, diametrically opposed to theirs. The Commission listened to their presentation, but confined their discussion primarily to Mr. Cooper's revised design, which was what had been submitted to them by the American Battle Monuments Commission, the agency responsible for erecting the memorial.

The members agreed that there were now two designs for the memorial, not one that had been revised. And they agreed that they both had the same problem—too many elements. The new scheme, in fact, seemed to be three separate memorials; in dealing with the problems of circulation and the walling off of the memorial from the Mall, it had lost the sense of focus and unity seen in the original design, and it had made the memorial, with its thirty-eight sculptured figures, visible from all over that part of the Mall. The Chairman observed that the great success of the Vietnam Memorial was that it had not disturbed the existing Mall elements. The portrayal of the thirty-eight soldiers also worried the members. They were impressed with the photographs of the clay maquettes that Mr. Gaylord presented, but concerned that they would become too realistic as they were developed. Instead of the line of semi-abstract stone figures, moving from war to peace, seen in the original design, these soldiers were seen to be on a mission, encountering enemy fire, and they were portrayed in a great variety of poses.

The Chairman told General Stilwell that it was clear the Commission was not ready to take any action, that there was not enough design information on which to base a decision. He thought the only way to proceed was to stake out the design on the site, including the vertical elements—the sculpture, elevated flag plaza and the wall—so that the effect from the Mall and from Independence Avenue could be measured. It was agreed by the Park Service representative that this would be done at the time of the next meeting, in January 1991.

Another memorial sited in Area I would honor black Revolutionary War patriots who fought in the war or provided civilian assistance, and all those who sought freedom from slavery. The location selected, after consultation with the National Capital Memorial Commission, was in Constitution Gardens, across the lake from the Signers Memorial. The Commission of Fine Arts was reluctant to approve any more sites in this area, since it had been intended to be an informal, natural park; there was concern that it was becoming a popular place for memorials, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Signers Memorial already having been erected there. In giving their approval, the members strongly recommended that the memorial be low-key in design and complement the Signers Memorial in size and garden-like character.

The Commission looked at a preliminary design in March 1990. The drawings showed a grassy forecourt, defined by low fieldstone walls, rising from the edge of the lake to an elliptical plane paved in granite. On this court were thirteen, slightly larger-than-life bronze statues, each holding a scroll that gave information on notable people and events in black history. The architect, Marshall Purnell, explained that the memorial would have a teaching function; groups could be accommodated on the lawn, the steps leading to the ellipse, and on more formal stone benches near the statues.

Concern was expressed by the Commission that the gentle, undulating slope from the lake up to the ridge behind would be altered, and that the statues, as they were placed, would interrupt the view of the high ridge behind the memorial and the horizon beyond. There was also a feeling that the memorial had taken on a monumentality it should not have in this poetic spot, and that it did not relate well to the Signers Memorial across the lake. The Commission asked to see a new solution responding to these concerns, one in which free-standing sculpture was not a dominant element; the use of a wall with bas-reliefs and inscriptions was considered one way to give the memorial the low-key, landscape character the members thought appropriate to the site.

The addition of a statue at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial honoring women who served in the war was proposed in October 1987. The members listened to Senator David Durenberger and others, including several Vietnam nurses, testify that the statue was needed to give recognition to the thousands of women who had served but were not recognized at the memorial. The preferred site was in an existing tree opening to the southeast of the memorial wall, near the perimeter path.

Other speakers were opposed to the addition as upsetting the delicate balance achieved when the figures of three infantrymen and a flag were added

to the original design. They thought also that the statue as sited would not have the impact its proponents desired, and that it would inevitably lead to requests for further additions. The project architect for the original memorial, the landscape architect, and the former director of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund all took this point of view. A letter from the designer, Maya Lin, stated her objection to any further additions to the memorial. She observed that it had been completed and given to the nation in 1983, and the number of visitors attested to its success; she thought that once concessions had been made to one group, others would demand to be recognized.

The members generally agreed with these observations, although all said they had been very moved by the nurses' testimony. It was pointed out that the sacrifices of women had already been recognized: The names of those who had died were recorded on the wall, and there was an inscription that read: "In honor of the men and women of the armed forces". It was also noted that Congress had recognized the need to honor military women by passing legislation authorizing a memorial to women who had served in all wars and in all capacities. A vote was taken, with Mr. Hart abstaining because of his involvement with the existing sculpture at the memorial; the addition of the statue was disapproved, with Mr. Goodman voting in favor, saying he had changed his mind after hearing the nurses' testimony.

After the decision, the Commission received a large number of letters in protest. The sponsors of the proposal continued their efforts, and in November 1988 President Reagan signed a bill authorizing a memorial, "on federal land in the District of Columbia", honoring women Vietnam veterans. The memorial would be erected under the Commemorative Works Act, which left open the possibility of future legislation authorizing a site at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Under the act, the site and design would have to be approved by the Commission of Fine Arts. A year later President Bush signed legislation authorizing the erection of the memorial in Area I; it read: "It is the sense of the Congress that it would be most fitting and appropriate to place the memorial within the 2.2 acre site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial."

In April 1990 the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed several possible locations for the memorial. The architects, Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, had made a thorough study of the area and had eliminated a number of possible locations because they were either intrusive on the existing memorial elements, presented circulation problems, were too remote, or were too close to the traffic noise of Constitution Avenue.

Three sites were recommended for consideration. Two were in the same area as the one proposed for the nurse statue: near the path at the south end of the memorial precinct that led to the statue of the infantrymen and the entry plaza. One was to the north of the path, the other to the south; the Memorial Advisory Commission had preferred the one to the south. The third site was along the path coming from the Lincoln Memorial. This was the one least favored by the architects, as there was already a certain amount of congestion there due to the proximity of the statue, flag, and the directories for finding names on the Wall. The Commission members tended to agree that



Law Enforcement Officers Memorial; model, looking south. Photograph courtesy Davis Buckley.

the site south of the path held the most promise, but they did not want to rule out another location near the entry, particularly the one along the Lincoln Memorial path, as there was, as yet, no design for the memorial. The design was to be selected by competition, and it was thought that it would be better not to limit the artists to one site.

Several other memorials, not in Area I, were approved by the Commission of Fine Arts between 1985 and 1990. A site on Judiciary Square for the Law Enforcement Officers Memorial was approved in February 1988. A preliminary design was reviewed in October, but not approved; the main objection was to an oval colonnade with a heavy sculptural frieze that encompassed the site. The Commission did not think it related well to the court buildings on the square or to the monumental red brick Pension Building just to the north, and it tended to wall out the public from the square, which contained a Metro entrance and two elevators for the handicapped. The members were also

concerned about the number of elements in the memorial, which resulted in a lack of focus: in addition to the colonnade, there was a curved, bermed wall on which the names of those who had given their lives were inscribed, a curved boundary of trees, a raised plaza in the open central area containing statuary and inscriptions, two 60-foot flagpoles, and a laser element emitting a thin, blue line of light. The members did not like the idea of using a laser element.

A revised design was submitted in January 1989. The colonnade was gone, replaced by an oval of two rows of pleached linden trees, broken at the major north and south entrances to provide an unobstructed view of the Pension Building, with minor breaks at the east and west entrances and at the diagonal paths. Between the two rows of trees was a walk, with a granite wall containing the listing of names on one side and a lower seating wall, also of granite, on the other. The sculpture had been moved to a position at the Metro entrance wall.

In the following months, details of the treatment of the central space, kept open to accommodate large crowds during ceremonies and to facilitate the public's use of Metro, were worked out; an intricate red and grey granite paving pattern was developed. A major problem was the treatment of the two Metro handicapped elevators, set on a diagonal in this central space. The architect, Davis Buckley, suggested that they be clad in stone to make them more sympathetic to the other elements of the memorial, but Metro officials were reluctant, saying that the dark brown anodized aluminum sheathing was an identifying mark of Metro, and to change them would be confusing to users. The Commission members agreed with the architect. The Chairman suggested that to make the elevators seem part of the design, they could be tied into an elliptical pergola that would help define the inner space. A satisfactory design was developed on this basis. In January 1990 final drawings and material samples were approved, and in May, final landscaping plans were approved.

At the May meeting, maquettes for the proposed sculpture were first shown to the Commission. Sculptor Ray Kaskey explained the dilemma he had faced: his clients were committed to representational sculpture, but he was faced with the task of representing, in one or several statues, all the different kinds of people, with their different jobs and different uniforms, that made up the law enforcement community. He said he had decided to use the symbolism of animals instead, and had picked the lion as most appropriate to represent the law enforcement officer. He showed maquettes of a crouching male lion, representing the active, interventionist nature of law enforcement, and a female lion, in a more passive pose, symbolizing the peace-keeping aspect. Two male lions would be placed on the north (Metro) side, at the ends of the memorial wall, with the females in corresponding positions on the south. Opposite them, on the seating walls, would be groupings of cubs, symbolizing the protection given by law enforcement officers; they would also symbolize the families of those who had given their lives. The Commission was pleased with the sculpture concept and looked forward to seeing further development. The sculptures were intended to be cast in bronze.

A memorial to the Lebanese-American poet and philosopher, Kahlil Gibran, in the form of a contemplative park, was approved in 1989 for a wooded site along Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., across from the British embassy. It will consist of two landscaped terraces, each with a water feature, the lower having a portrait bust of Gibran and inscriptions relative to his life and work. Features of the memorial will be the cedars of Lebanon trees used in the landscaping, and the intricate star-shaped paving pattern, of Middle Eastern derivation, carried out in various kinds of granite in pastel colors. Architects for the memorial were Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum; the sculptor was Gordon Kray.

In Georgetown, a memorial to Francis Scott Key will be located on an unused triangular site near Key Bridge, the former location of the Key mansion. It will take the form of a landscaped park with a bust of the author of the Star Spangled Banner, by sculptor Betty Dunstan, a flag, and several interpretive signs relating to Key's life. Final designs, by landscape architects Oehme & VanSweden, were approved in September 1988.

The Mall

The Washington Monument and the treatment of the grounds surrounding it received considerable attention from the Commission of Fine Arts during the years 1985-1990. In January 1986 the members looked at a new concept for lighting the monument, developed in an effort to get rid of the spotty effect caused by deteriorating fixtures and the shadows cast by the ring of flags around the base. The three types of lights in place since the late 1950s would be retained: those around the base of the monument; large, retractable vault lights placed at some distance; and even farther back, pedestal lights. The vault lights would be set inside the circle of flags to eliminate shadows. The lighting concept was approved and a mock-up seen in July 1988. Although the lights were considered too bright, the members were pleased with the color and the way in which the planes of the monument were differentiated.

The Commission had reviewed various elements of a master plan for the Washington Monument grounds from 1981 to 1984; in February 1986 further proposals were presented by the National Park Service. Plans for upgrading the base of the monument were shown, with viewing and seating areas and shade trees to make the waiting period more comfortable for visitors. While realizing that visitors could wait as long as two hours in the summer and something had to be done to get them out of the hot sun, the members were reluctant to see any element added to the base of the monument, including trees, that would detract from its minimalist beauty, the plain obelisk meeting the unadorned earth. It was suggested that the Park Service investigate a ticketing plan, as well as a holding facility, away from the monument in a shaded area.

The Park Service's second proposal was for a new visitors center to replace the small stone lodge that had been in use for many years. This facility was sited at the northeast corner of the grounds, at 15th Street and Madison Drive; it would accommodate food services, indoor and outdoor dining areas, and shops. The Park Service architect described it as an above-ground pavilion-type building, adding that designs for an underground or bermed structure had not been satisfactory visually. In spite of the intention to screen the facility with trees, the Commission thought it would disrupt the vistas along both 15th Street and Madison Drive to an unacceptable degree. A smaller building on an alternate site, either farther west or at the southeast corner of the grounds, was suggested; it was stressed that the empty expanse of green lawn should be kept as open as possible. The concept of planting trees in all four corners of the grounds was approved, but the other elements, including attempts to improve pedestrian access from the east, were not.

It was not until January 1990 that a revised plan was seen by the Commission. A modest visitor facility, without a restaurant, was proposed for the southeast corner of the grounds; it would be located behind the existing Sylvan Theatre and concealed by trees. The realignment of 15th Street would keep the curved form, unlike the plan shown in 1986, and a new path system to guide people coming from the Mall had been developed. The treatment around the base of the monument had been much simplified. The members thought the revised plan was a great improvement, and it was approved in concept.

On the northern edge of the Washington Monument grounds, along Constitution Avenue opposite the Ellipse, is the German-American Friendship Garden, commemorating three hundred years of German settlement in America. It was submitted in 1985, before the Commemorative Works Act prohibited memorials of this kind in the Mall area. With the retention of the vista along the White House-Jefferson Memorial axis uppermost in their minds, the members suggested a low, linear garden, an embellishment of Constitution Avenue rather than an element along the vista. Unfortunately, the garden straddles the entrance to a parking lot on the monument grounds, an intrusion the Commission strongly recommended be removed at the earliest possible time.

Plans for the National Sculpture Garden on the Mall continued to be reviewed in 1986 and 1987. The restaurant pavilion became an open-air structure with only informal food service, and the concept of garden "rooms" containing sculpture was somewhat altered with the addition of a perimeter fence.

The White House Area

There was a considerable amount of building activity in the White House area from 1985 to 1990, both public and private. Because of heavy visitor traffic and security requirements, East Executive Avenue, the street between the White House and the Treasury Building, was closed to vehicular traffic and



East Executive Park. Photograph by Jack E. Boucher, courtesy National Park Service.

developed as a pedestrian walk. It was planted with pin oaks, flower beds and grass panels, and accented with iron entrance gates, seating, and information kiosks. The area has been very popular with visitors since it opened in 1987, and it has given the east entrance to the White House a pleasant, landscaped setting. The Commission also reviewed plans for improving the paving of the White House perimeter sidewalks and the upgrading of Sherman Park, and looked at several tree planting alternatives for the Pennsylvania Avenue frontage.

Security concerns dictated another change in the appearance of the White House sidewalk on Pennsylvania Avenue. With the Park Service, the Com-



Office building, 750 17th Street, N.W. Photograph by Dan Cunningham, courtesy Keyes Condon Florance, Architects.

mission reviewed, in 1986 and 1987, several designs and mock-ups of bollards to be placed near the street edge. These had to meet strict requirements as to height, diameter and distance apart, and the task of giving them an attractive appearance as well was not an easy one.

By the time the Commission looked at a plan to place the bollards along the edge of the south lawn of the White House, in 1989, technology had improved, and the members were pleased to be able to approve a slim black

metal version, which was more satisfying, aesthetically, than the thick, concrete-clad type used along Pennsylvania Avenue. The Commission did not want to see the bollards used across the central axis of the grounds, however, because the great vista from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial would be interrupted. Plans for depressing E Street in this area, for security reasons, were discussed with the Park Service several times during the year, as were long-range plans for improving and expanding White House visitor facilities and providing parking under the Ellipse.

In the White House area several private projects were reviewed by the Commission under the Shipstead-Luce Act. The Corcoran Gallery of Art submitted plans for a major addition along New York Avenue. It was designed to follow closely the style of the original Beaux-Arts building; the architect was Warren Cox of Hartman-Cox. Final plans were approved in July 1988.

On 17th Street, near Pennsylvania Avenue, a new office building, designed by Keyes Condon Florance, was approved in 1986 and completed in 1989. It replaced several small buildings adjoining the Metropolitan Club, at the corner of H Street. Although contemporary in design, it deferred to the turn-of-the-century club building in color and material, and in certain aspects of style.

A second office building in the White House area was approved in 1989. It will replace a high-rise building on the site at 800 Connecticut Avenue, at the northwest corner of Lafayette Square. Its proximity to the small-scale, historic Decatur House and the monumental Chamber of Commerce building, as well as its visibility from Lafayette Square and the White House, made the design of particular interest to the Commission. The architects were Keyes Condon Florance.

Pennsylvania Avenue

The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation continued to submit a large number of projects. The Pennsylvania Building, facing Western Plaza at 13th Street, received a new "skin," changing it from a typical 1950s building with horizontal bands of windows to a 1980s Post-Modern style, altering significantly the view down the avenue from 15th Street. The architects were Smith, Segretti & Tepper.

At 13th and E Streets, plans to restore the Warner Brothers Theatre building and erect an infill addition on E Street were approved in 1987 and 1989. The architect for the restoration of the theatre building was Shalom Baranes Associates; for the addition, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners.

Across the avenue, the Commission reviewed a primarily glass addition to the Old Post Office pavilion; it will occupy the courtyard of the Internal Revenue Service building, with a connecting link to the Old Post Office. The mem-



Market Square project and Navy Memorial. Photograph by Capt. Robert S. Jones, USN (Ret.), courtesy Navy Memorial Foundation.



Evening Star Building and new additions. Photograph by Carol Pearce, courtesy Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

bers' concern here was that the old building retain its free-standing character and that the mass of the addition, as originally presented, be reduced. The Commission worked with the architects, Karn, Charuhas, Chapman & Twohey, to achieve these ends, and a revised design was approved in September 1988. The same firm submitted plans in October 1990 for finishing off the end facades of the IRS building, left unfinished when it was built in the 1930s under the assumption that the Old Post Office would be demolished and the circular courtyard of the Federal Triangle completed.

In 1987 the Commission approved plans for the restoration of the landmark Evening Star Building (1902), at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 11th Street, and for additions to the north and west. The architects were Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

For the Navy Memorial the Commission approved the statue of the Lone Sailor by sculptor Stanley Bleifeld. The bronze figure, slightly larger than life-size, was placed in the circular plaza where the map of the world is inscribed. In 1989 and 1990, approval was given to some of the designs for the bas-relief sculpture that will depict naval history and the work of the various



"The Lone Sailor" and sculptor Stanley Bleifeld.

divisions of the Navy. The bronze panels will be placed on the low walls defining the plaza. In 1986 the Commission approved the design for two large buildings flanking the Navy Memorial; where they face the memorial they repeat the curve of the central plaza. They were designed in the classical style, by George Hartman of Hartman-Cox, to complement the Federal Triangle buildings on the south side of the avenue. A feature of the design was the multi-story colonnade on the curved facades.

Hartman-Cox were also the architects for Phase II of the Pennsylvania Triangle project. Originally to have been a hotel and apartment building, both



Pennsylvania Plaza, 6th Street and Indiana Avenue, N.W.

program and architect changed, and in October 1987 the Commission reviewed plans for a new building, with a section fronting on 6th Street devoted to apartment use, and an office section along Indiana Avenue. The office building was to be limestone, like Phase I of the project, but the residential section was red brick, a departure from construction on Pennsylvania Avenue but found frequently on late Victorian buildings in the area. The members were concerned about the color of the brick but otherwise liked the design, which with its corner turret helped relieve the blandness of the first phase of the project and repeated the shape seen in two Victorian commercial structures

nearby, the Apex and Fireman's Fund buildings. Subsequently, the brick was changed to a lighter shade; after reviewing a mock-up in December 1988 the final design was approved and the project completed in 1990.

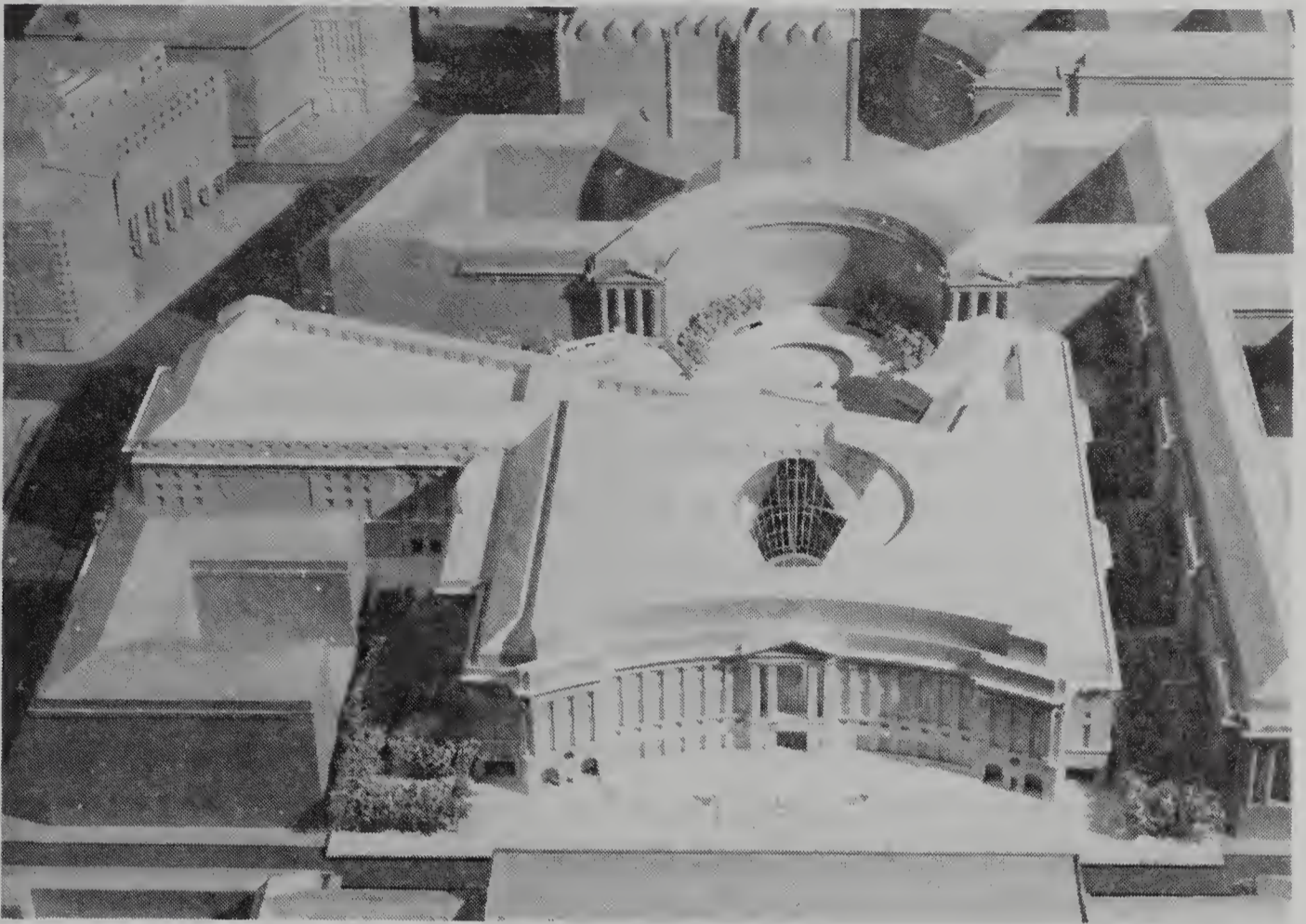
Plans for the renovation of the Fireman's Fund building and the replacement of its long-missing dome were approved in March 1988, with the Commission strongly recommending that the new dome be covered in gold leaf. Architects for this project were Devroux & Purnell. In the same year, plans were approved for a new building just to the north, on 7th Street, by Keyes Condon Florance.

The International Cultural and Trade Center, to be built in the Great Plaza of the Federal Triangle, will be a large project and a very important one, because of the way it will affect the appearance of the capital's monumental core. Originally planned for the southwest section of the city, the site was moved to the never-developed Great Plaza, used for fifty years as a parking lot. The Commission reviewed the concept for this development twice, in April 1987 and again a year later. The overriding concern, one shared with the other review agencies involved, was the great mass of the proposed building envelope. Through suggestions made by the members, some reduction was achieved.

After an architectural competition, the Commission reviewed a preliminary design by the winning firm, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, in November 1989. Architect James Freed made the presentation. He began by noting that, unlike the rest of the Federal Triangle buildings, this would have a strong public use aspect; federal offices would occupy the upper floors, but the lower levels would be devoted to public space — theatres, restaurants, shops, and space for exhibitions and international festivals. Inside the 14th Street entrance would be a large, circular, skylit arcade with several levels of exhibit and retail space. He observed that people were hesitant to enter monumental government buildings and said that he had made the entrances numerous and "friendly," in an effort to invite people in.

In discussing his design, Mr. Freed said he had taken into consideration the character of the surrounding streets: Constitution Avenue was very formal, with government buildings lining both sides of the street; Pennsylvania Avenue was less so, particularly because of the private development on the north side; on 14th Street, there was the great strength and mass of the Department of Commerce building, with its facade running the length of a city block. Here, he had curved the facade of his building back, to give some relief from the monumentality, provide open space, and an attractive setting for the existing Straus Fountain.

Turning to Pennsylvania Avenue, Mr. Freed commented that with the construction of Freedom Plaza (formerly Western Plaza) and Pershing Park, the diagonal of the avenue now ended at 13th Street, and the two blocks beyond had quite a different character. Mr. Freed said his proposal was to fill in the space next to the Beaux-Arts style District building (from 13 to 13 ½ Street) with a building of similar massing, minus the heavy classical detail. Then, at 13th Street, where the diagonal of Pennsylvania Avenue began, he would



International Cultural and Trade Center; model, looking east, showing 14th Street entrance.
 Photograph by Nathaniel Lieberman, courtesy Pei Cobb Freed & Partners.

provide a wide pedestrian entrance plaza into his project. To relieve the 700-foot long wall of the new building mass, which formed one side of the plaza, he had placed a low, octagonal building, mostly glass, that would house ICTC functions, primarily restaurants. Beyond that the building curved out in a partial completion of the hemicycle of the former Post Office Department building, but allowing the open space to flow through to Constitution Avenue through an entrance next to the Departmental Auditorium. Mr. Freed said the unfinished ends of the Post Office building would be completed, and in front of the hemicycle there would be a circular fountain area, at the Metro entrance. He noted that throughout the project, cornice heights would match those of the original Triangle buildings, and although the fenestration would not be the same, there would be the same proportion of window to wall. He pointed out blank panels on the walls of several of the elevation drawings and said that they were intended to be filled with artwork, carrying on the tradition of embellishing architecture with art, so important in the original Triangle grouping. Limestone and glass, with bronze trim, would be the principal materials.

The Commission was pleased with the presentation, and Mr. Freed was congratulated on what the members saw as a brilliant solution to a difficult problem. They agreed there were still many details to be worked out — there were questions about the octagonal pavilion and about the detailing, how classical it would be — but it was noted that this was only a concept submission, and on this basis approval was granted unanimously.

Lighting

Since it was established in 1910, the Commission of Fine Arts has been concerned with lighting in the capital city. The Commission's involvement with street lighting, and with attempts to light the major memorials and public buildings in the 1970s, has been mentioned elsewhere in this book.¹ For many years the Commission was not in favor of lighting public buildings and monuments. Concessions were made to light the Washington Monument in 1929 when the increase in the number of airplanes made it a hazard. The Capitol was first lit with spotlights for the second inauguration of Wilson in 1917; the lights remained, again, as a warning to aircraft. By 1920 lights had been placed on the roof to light the dome.² The first lighting of the White House took place during World War II, when dim lights were placed on the grounds for security reasons.

As the level of lighting rose in the city generally, illumination of the monuments and major public buildings became more desirable. True floodlighting of the Washington Monument began in 1958; the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials, the White House, and the Federal Triangle were lit in the early 1970s. Early lighting attempts usually resulted in an overly-bright or spotty effect, and with the advent of light sources other than incandescent, there was also a color problem—mercury vapor was blue and sodium vapor, orange. These sources, however, were considerably more economical than incandescent and had to be considered, especially since they were used on the city streets and thus affected the lighting of buildings.

The early Federal Triangle lighting was never successful; the attic stories were too bright, and the cornices and other architectural features thrown into shadow. In November 1987 the Commission was asked by the General Services Administration and the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation to view a mock-up of a new lighting scheme, designed to create a uniform, soft lighting that would enhance the architecture. Although all problems were not solved, the members were encouraged by the general direction. In March 1988 the Commission saw color renderings of the scheme as it had been further developed. During the discussion, the great discrepancy between the lighting of the White House and the Old Executive Office Building was noted, and the representative from GSA was asked if these two buildings would be coordinated with the proposed Federal Triangle project. He said meetings had already been held with officials from the White House, Treasury (which had its own new lighting), and PADC; there had been general agreement that the lighting of all buildings in the area should be integrated with the Federal Triangle project.

At the July meeting the Commission discussed the mock-up of the new Washington Monument lighting, which led to a consensus that the three great

¹ pp. 15, 37.

² Although the Commission does not have authority over the Capitol building, or the Library of Congress, it has generally worked closely with the Architect of the Capitol's office.

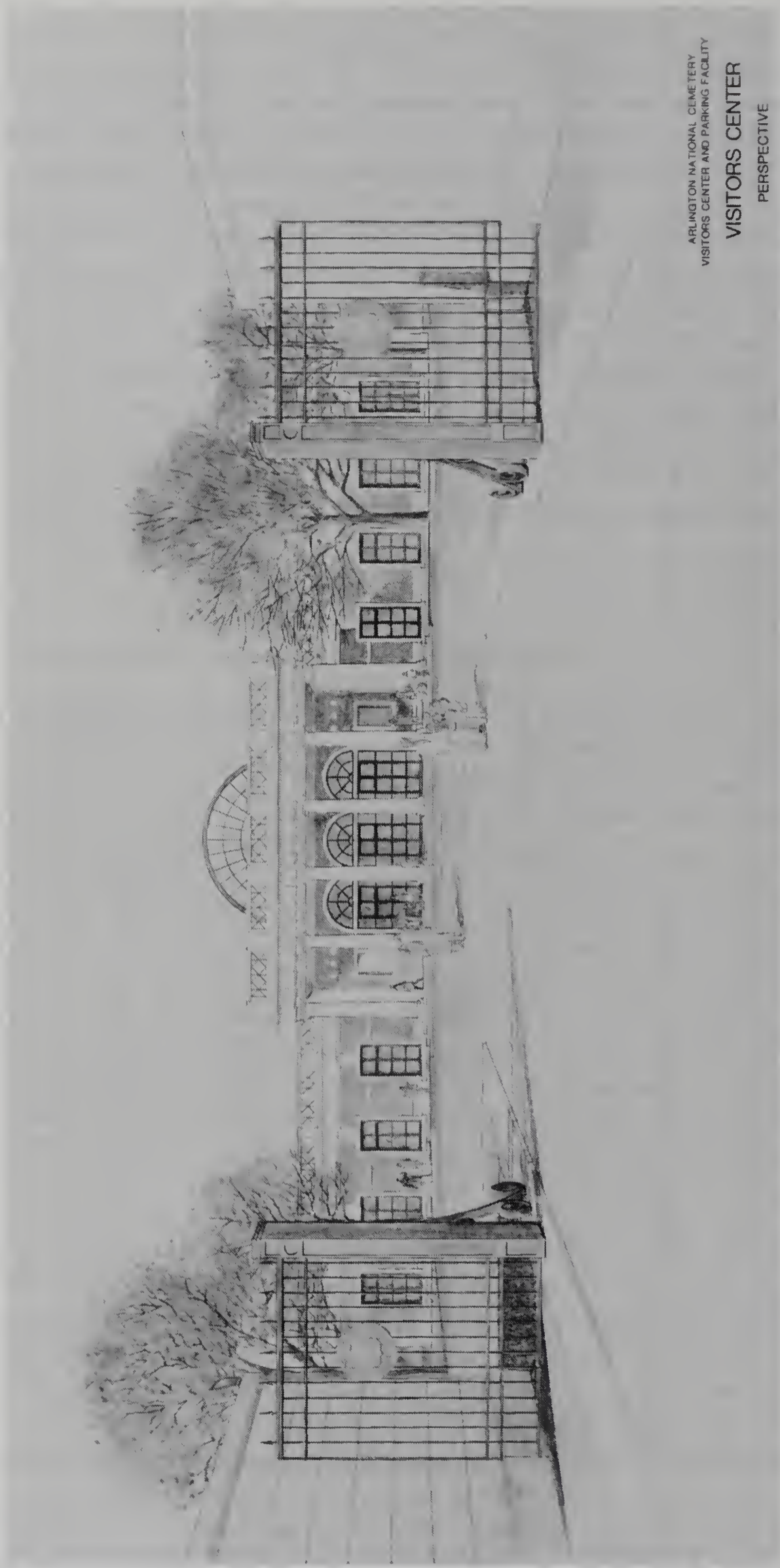
accents on the Mall — the Capitol, Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial — should be lit with the same intensity and color; going beyond this, the idea was reinforced that all lighting in the monumental core should be coordinated. It was thought that the several agencies involved, including the Park Service, GSA, and PADC, should get together on this matter.

In October the staff made an evening inspection tour of lighting in the monumental core, took photographs, and briefed the Commission before taking the members on a similar tour; it became clear that jurisdictional lines in the city were creating a chaos in lighting, and it was realized that representatives from the District government and the private sector should be included in any future meetings on the subject. Such a meeting was held in November at the Architect of the Capitol's office; those present viewed the lighting of the Capitol precinct and Pennsylvania Avenue from the west terrace of the Capitol and discussed the involvement of their respective agencies. It was expected that the Commission's interest in this topic would continue.

Other Building Projects

The Commission of Fine Arts approved a significant number of other projects not included in the preceding categories. Major changes were made at Arlington Cemetery. On Memorial Avenue, leading to the cemetery, a large visitors center was approved. With the exception of a contemporary style glass barrel vault, the building was designed as a classical pavilion, in keeping with the Beaux-Arts detailing of Memorial Drive and the architecture of the Custis-Lee mansion. Set back from the row of white oaks lining the drive, it fit discreetly into the memorial setting. The Commission was pleased with the visitors center from the first review in November 1985, but many months were spent working with the architect, Francis D. Lethbridge, on the design of a large parking facility, set along Jefferson Davis Highway. Although the architect had been conscious of the visibility problem, and had terraced the structure and screened it with trees, the members thought he had not gone far enough. Throughout 1986 the Commission looked at revised designs and landscape plans, aimed at lowering the building, moving it farther back from the highway, and achieving a landscape design that would give the maximum screening effect and still look natural. Lighting levels within were kept at a minimum to further reduce visibility on winter afternoons. Details of the visitors center, parking facility, and ancillary structures — lights, paths, entrance gates, and Tourmobile shelter — were reviewed throughout 1986, with the last detail approved in January 1987. Both facilities were opened to the public in 1988.

An interesting project was submitted by the National Arboretum in 1986: the erection on the Arboretum grounds of the old columns from the east front of the Capitol, kept in storage since that facade was moved forward in the late 1950s. The idea was that of Mrs. Ethel Garrett, who had worked for years to make it a reality. As originally designed by the English garden designer,



ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY
VISITORS CENTER AND PARKING FACILITY

VISITORS CENTER
PERSPECTIVE

Arlington Cemetery Visitors Center, perspective drawing of entrance. Photograph courtesy Francis D. Lethbridge & Associates.



National Arboretum, Capitol Columns. Photograph by Patricia Faux, courtesy Friends of the U.S. National Arboretum.

Russell Page, and carried out by EDAW, Inc., Washington landscape architects, the columns were erected on a grassy knoll, much like a Classical ruin, with a pool below in which they were reflected. On the recommendation of the Commission, minor changes were made in the grading and shape of the pool, ensuring that the result would be natural — more romantic than classic — and not impose too much architecture on the Arboretum setting.

A new master plan for the Arboretum was submitted in 1989 and 1990. It was primarily an update of previous plans and focused on dealing with the problems of increased visitation, as well as upgrading existing facilities and providing for new ones. A major element was the creation of a new entrance and garden off New York Avenue, in an area formerly occupied by brick-making kilns; some of the old kilns and stacks would remain on the site.

For the State Department, the Commission approved designs for three new chancery buildings at the International Center, located at Connecticut Avenue and Van Ness Street, N.W.: Austria, in 1989, and in 1990, Egypt and Singapore.

The Smithsonian submitted plans for extensive landscaping of the Hirshhorn Museum plaza in 1990. Outdoor rooms will be created by the landscaping, providing a setting for the display of sculpture from the Hirshhorn's collection. Various types of paving material for the plaza were also discussed, but final approval had not been given by the end of 1990. Plans were also seen for outdoor lighting, which will provide a subtle glow, defining the round shape of the building and illuminating the plaza by reflected light.

The National Zoo continued to submit projects during this period. In April 1986 a revised master plan was approved; it placed more emphasis on whole habitats, such as grasslands and tropical rainforests, rather than single-species exhibits, with landscaping and plant material playing a more important role than architecture. Plans for improving circulation by extending the Olmsted Walk were approved in 1988, with careful study being given to grading; in the same year preliminary plans for Amazonia, the tropical rainforest exhibit, were approved. Revised plans, for a smaller building, were given final approval in April 1990.

The Navy submitted a number of projects for several locations. At Bolling Field in Anacostia, the Commission approved designs for a special investigations building in 1985, and for naval intelligence, aircraft support, and communications facilities in 1988. A physics laboratory (1986), an electronic systems laboratory (1987), and a center for space technology (1990), were approved for the Naval Research Laboratory. At the Navy Yard, a parking structure and renovation of one of the old buildings were approved, both complying with the guidelines for adaptive reuse and new construction, implemented to ensure compatibility with the Navy Yard's historic character. Of future interest was the approval, in 1985, of the concept for a massive project in the Navy Yard area, to be known as the Southeast Federal Center. This is to be a new federal office development with public amenities such as a waterfront park, promenades, and restoration of the historic buildings in the area. A final draft was approved in 1989, as were the design guidelines for the Environmental Protection Agency headquarters, the first large building planned for the area.

A major submission from the Army was a new intermediate health care facility for the Soldiers and Airmens Home. The first submission, in November 1987, was not favorably received by the Commission of Fine Arts nor the other reviewing agencies involved, because it was predicated on the demolition of several attractive early twentieth century buildings surrounding the courtyard. Additionally, the building was not sympathetic in style to the remaining old buildings, and a curved, sunken terrace in the otherwise rectangular courtyard had been created to accommodate a partially below-grade dining hall. A second submission in October 1988 showed a more compatible architectural style and the retention of the old formality of the courtyard, except for a small sunken area in front of the dining hall. Although the members were still not pleased with the concept of demolition, they recognized the need for a larger facility than could be contained in the existing buildings; they

approved the design, putting the architect on notice that they would be concerned with the preservation issue in any future construction phases.

One of the most significant projects reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts from 1985 to 1990 was the renovation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of Union Station, one of the city's great landmarks. Built in 1907 to the designs of Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, it provided the capital with a monumental "gateway" in the Beaux-Arts style, and it was among the first buildings to implement the recommendations of the McMillan Commission.³ Union Station was a lively place during the heyday of the railroad, but by the late 1960s it was nearly deserted. When it was converted to a visitors center for the 1976 Bicentennial, drastic changes were made to the interior. A large "pit" was cut into the floor of the main waiting room to accommodate a slide show of views of the capital, and the grand concourse was greatly altered. A large parking structure was built directly behind the station.

The visitors center was not a success, and the building was allowed to deteriorate. When railroad use picked up in the 1980s and Metro provided convenient access, plans were made by the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation, under congressional authorization, to restore the building and provide railroad travelers with the amenity of an attractive, functional station; the enormous amount of space remaining would be used for shops, restaurants, and movie theatres. The Commission of Fine Arts enthusiastically approved the preliminary plans in March 1985, with the comment that although its jurisdiction was limited to the exterior, it hoped that those agencies that could speak to the interior renovations would make sure that the building's great spaces would not be compromised. Final plans were approved in February 1988, with details seen throughout the year. The station opened in October 1988 with praise from travelers and local residents alike, and the expectation that its restoration would make it once more the lively center it was in its early years. Architects for the restoration were Harry Weese & Associates.

Near Union Station, a new building was approved in 1989 for the National Guard, on the site of their existing headquarters at North Capitol Street and Massachusetts Avenue; the architect was Alexander Jeffries.

In 1986 the Commission was asked by Senator Mathias of Maryland to comment on a large project, called Port America, planned for the Maryland side of the Potomac River. It would include a tower, fifty-two stories high, that would be highly visible from several vantage points in the city, including the south lawn of the White House, and it would dominate the Washington skyline. The Commission felt strongly that this kind of development should not be allowed; it was feared that, if built, it would set a precedent for a ring of tall office buildings around the city. There was similar concern expressed in Congress and by the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Park Service. The developer and his architect, Philip Johnson, agreed

³ See p. 2.



Statue of Liberty commemorative coin.
Photograph courtesy United States Mint.



Bicentennial of the Constitution commemorative coin.
Photograph courtesy United States Mint.

to reduce the height somewhat, but it was still not acceptable. In October 1986 a hearing was held before the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works. Testimony was heard from a number of government agencies, including the Commission of Fine Arts, against the tower, and from the developer and Representative Hoyer from Prince Georges County in support of it. Later in the year the Federal Aviation Administration opposed the building on safety grounds, making it uninsurable; the developer then agreed to erect two towers, at thirty stories each, which seemed a significant improvement to those concerned with the aesthetic impact on the capital.

Coins and Medals

The federal government's coin and medal program was particularly active during this period. To mark the centennial of the Statue of Liberty in 1986, three coins were issued: a five dollar gold coin commemorating the statue's 100th anniversary, a silver dollar commemorating Ellis Island as a gateway for immigrants to America, and a half-dollar piece of the standard alloy (cupronickel) honoring the contributions made by immigrants. The designs were the work of several sculptor/engravers of the Mint and were favorably received by the Commission of Fine Arts. The coins were a great commercial success; the five dollar gold piece was sold out in a matter of weeks. This coin, designed by Elizabeth Jones, chief sculptor-engraver of the Mint, also won the Coin of the Year Award, an annual event sponsored by a leading publisher of numismatic books. All surcharges from the sale of the coins were turned over to the Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation for use in the restoration and maintenance of the Statue of Liberty and the buildings at Ellis Island.

A major event for the Mint in 1986 was the issuance of gold and silver bullion coins, the gold coins being the first non-commercial coins in that metal since 1933. They were intended to offer investors an alternative to foreign gold. The scheduling for producing the coins was, unfortunately, very tight, and it was decided to base the design for the four gold coins (which varied in size and weight) on Augustus Saint Gaudens' double eagle of 1907; the silver dollar was based on A.A. Weinman's 1916 "Walking Liberty" half dollar. While recognizing the great beauty of both coins, the Commission was disappointed that new designs, representing the best in contemporary American art, had not been sought out. There were new designs chosen for the reverse of both coins: the gold coins showed a family of eagles, which the members did not think paired well with the Saint Gaudens obverse; on the reverse of the silver dollar was an American eagle, to which there were no objections.

The review of these two major coin issues — the Statue of Liberty and gold and silver bullion coins — reinforced a belief long held by the Commission of Fine Arts: that the design of the nation's coins and medals should be opened up more frequently to artists outside the Mint, thus involving a wide range of Americans in the process. To this end, the Commission urged that limited competitions be held for some of the more significant coin and medal

programs. The Mint agreed to pursue this idea, and competitions were held for the following coin issues: Bicentennial of the Constitution (1987), 1988 Olympic games; Bicentennial of the Congress (1989), the centennial of the birth of President Eisenhower (1990), and the fiftieth anniversary of the Mount Rushmore Memorial (1990). Names of artists were obtained from various sculpture and medallic art societies, and from the Commission of Fine Arts and other federal agencies with expertise in this field. Mint artists were not excluded, and, in fact, produced some of the winning designs.

In 1987, noting that it had been many years since the designs of the nation's circulating coins had been changed, the Commission passed a resolution, offered by member Diane Wolf, recommending to the Secretary of the Treasury and to the Congress that designs be changed on a timely basis. It was recommended that the new designs be obtained through invited, compensated competitions. In 1988 and 1989, legislation was introduced calling for new designs over a period of six years. The bills passed the Senate but were not brought to a vote in the House. At this writing the fate of the proposal is still uncertain.

From 1985 to 1990 the Commission reviewed a number of medals, among them one that honored a president, Harry Truman (1985); a first lady, Lady Bird Johnson (1986); two musicians, George Gershwin and Aaron Copland, (1986 and 1987); Soviet dissidents Natan and Avital Shcharansky (1987); philanthropist Mary Lasker (1988); athlete Jesse Owens (1989); and painter Andrew Wyeth (1989). The bicentennial of the United States Coast Guard was commemorated by a medal in 1990. All these medals were designed within the Mint; an open competition produced the design for a Vietnam Veterans medal in 1985.

District of Columbia Government

After about thirty years of urban renewal projects, one large tract of land remained under the control of the Redevelopment Land Agency in the mid-1980s: the so-called Portal site, across 14th Street from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The site is an important one in the plan of Washington. Maryland Avenue, one of the three primary axes radiating from the Capitol, bisects it (although the actual street has never been cut through in this area) and the Jefferson Memorial is in close proximity. For many years the area was given over to industrial and railroad use; in fact, railroad tracks still run along the axis of Maryland Avenue and cut the site in half. Recognizing the problems presented by this condition, the Commission was interested to see the development plan shown by architect Arthur Cotton Moore in December 1987. The two sections of the site were joined by a plaza over the tracks, where the vista to the Capitol was emphasized. A connecting link with the Washington Channel, utilizing an abandoned railroad bridge, was also part of the plan. The five-building project was to be built in phases. The Commission was pleased with the site plan and gave it concept approval, making this



The Portals, photo montage with model. Photograph by Hambright & Associates, courtesy Republic Properties Corporation.

approval contingent, however, on the inclusion, in Phase I, of the central landscaping and water feature on the plaza. As a result of several further submissions in 1989, the final working drawings for Phase I were approved.

Plans for the renovation and restoration of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Georgetown were submitted in 1985. The project included some structural work, additional cantilevering for wider sidewalks (made necessary by the increased number of walkers between the Rosslyn Metro station and Georgetown), replication of the original balustrade to the extent possible, and the replacement of the high mast highway lights with the traditional Washington globe street light, similar to the original lighting. At the suggestion of the Commission, the spacing of the lights was altered to conform to the original design.

Two new Metro stations were approved in 1985, in joint submissions by the National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit

Authority. They were located on a U.S. reservation at 10th and U streets, N.W., and in Fort Totten Park in northeast Washington. Approval was given in the same year for park improvements on the U.S. reservation at the Potomac Avenue, S.E. Metro station.

A project of local interest, although submitted by the National Park Service rather than the District government, was a new tennis center, including a stadium for tournaments, to be erected in Rock Creek Park near the Carter Barron Amphitheatre. A library was approved for the Shepherd Park area in the northwest section in 1987, and in the downtown southwest urban renewal area, an addition was approved for the highly acclaimed Design Center. It was the work of the original architects, Keyes Condon Florance, and was approved in 1988.

Proposals to enliven Chinatown with two large, ornate Chinese arches spanning H Street, N.W., were approved in 1985 and 1987. The first was a gift from the city of Beijing and was erected near 7th Street. The second, privately funded by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, is to be erected near 5th Street. Although generally reluctant to approve structures spanning Washington's streets, the Commission felt that in this case the street was not a major one, no vistas were involved, and the colorful arches would help define a unique part of the city.



Chinese arch, H Street at 7th Street, N.W. Photograph courtesy AEPA, Architects Engineers

Georgetown

For the first time in over a decade, the Georgetown submissions were not focused on large-scale waterfront development; attention was directed instead to the loss of open space in the residential area and the related concern about overly large additions to Georgetown's small historic houses. The increasing number of proposals for these additions caused the Georgetown Board to issue the following policy in 1986:

The Board believes that a new addition should be a subordinate element and not approach doubling the size of a house, nor should that addition noticeably change the existing geometry, nor become the dominant element, nor impinge on the open space of the block, regardless of what zoning may allow. In particular, a small house ought to have a small addition, reflecting the basic needs of the owner/occupant. This could include a new room or porch which would respect the geometry of the original house and not project substantially beyond the rear of adjacent buildings. The materials should blend with the predominant materials of the block, and visibility from the street should be minimal.

This policy should not be construed as conferring approval on those projects meeting the above criteria. Reviewing each submission on a case-by-case basis, the Commission may find a particular addition suitable or unsuitable for reasons relevant to the individual property.

The question of the Commission's jurisdiction over underground additions was also raised. While generally not visible from public space, and therefore not subject to Commission review, they often involve visual elements—ventilators, air conditioning equipment, access stairs, etc.—and of greater consequence, they make impossible any natural tree growth over them. As the tree canopy behind Georgetown's small buildings is an important part of the visual impact of the historic district, the Commission was able to limit the size of such additions to permit the planting of trees.

A long-standing, though unwritten, policy was stated with increasing frequency during the late 1980s: curb cuts (for driveways or garage entrances) are in most cases disruptive of the historic streetscape and are, therefore, seldom approved.

Illegal signs and awnings continued to be a problem in the commercial district, but with the help of the District's Buildings Inspection Division definite progress was made in this area.

A project that attracted considerable community interest was the infilling of the rear yards of three 19th century houses at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Reservoir Street. The first proposal, submitted late in 1984 to the Georgetown Board, was for a small hotel, with an underground parking entrance off Reservoir Street and substantial demolition of the old houses. The Board and the community were adamantly opposed to both the mass and density of this kind of development, and the proposal was never submitted to the Commission.

In December 1984 an alternative was submitted; it was a four story building with a glass mansard roof housing eight condominiums; it also had a prominent garage entrance. The design was disapproved because of its excessive height in relation to the adjacent small buildings, its mass, and the inappropriate character of the garage entrance and the glass mansard roof; demolition of all or part of the old buildings was also disapproved.

From 1985 through 1987 the project was reviewed and revised, with considerable pressure from residents in the area for further reduction in height and mass. Ultimately, the new building became a pair of semi-detached houses, two and one-half stories plus an English basement in height; the underground garage was abandoned, the final scheme showing only two residential garage entrances on Reservoir Street. The three old houses, all or part of which had been scheduled for demolition in the early schemes, had been saved and would undergo restoration. Although some of the residents still thought the development too extensive, the Commission felt it had gone as far as it could in preserving the maximum amount of open space and historic preservation without taking away the owners' rights. The architect for the project was William Cochran.

Another project that involved many in the Georgetown community was the demolition of the Cherry Hill Apartments, at 1024 Wisconsin Avenue, near the waterfront. The building, set back from the street on a hill, was built in 1914 and had been remodeled several times. While of no particular architectural or historical importance, it was unobtrusive and preserved a considerable amount of green space in front. The structure proposed to take its place, first submitted in December 1985, was larger and set much closer to the street. It underwent several reviews, leading to a reduction in bulk, improvement in its relation to the hilly site and the small houses to the north, and more satisfactory landscaping of the reduced open space along the street. In September 1986, after listening to the testimony of several residents opposing the demolition, Chairman Brown observed that the Commission was in a difficult position — approving the demolition of any building in Georgetown was always difficult. But in this case, he noted, the building was on the dividing line between large construction on the waterfront and the small scale residential area to the north, and the construction of the massive Dodge Center just south of the site had already changed the character of the streetscape. He thought that a new, somewhat larger structure might have the advantage of mediating between the two scales. A vote was taken, and the demolition of the old building and the concept design for the new were approved, although not unanimously. Working drawings were not approved until January 1988, with some residents still asking that a final determination not be made. Architects for the project were Shalom Baranes Associates.

A considerable amount of new construction was approved on M Street from 1985 to 1990. In 1986 approval was given for a three story office and retail building to be erected on a vacant lot at the southwest corner of 33rd and M streets. In deference to the small scale construction along M Street, the height was kept to thirty feet, although zoning would have permitted sixty.



Commercial building, 3307 M Street, N.W. Photograph by David Patterson/Carol Highsmith, courtesy Shalom Baranes Associates

The building was designed by Kvell/Corcoran. Across the street, at 3307 M Street, a large commercial project by architect Shalom Baranes generated more public comment. There were several 20th century buildings on the site, of no architectural or historical distinction, and the Commission approved their demolition. The real problem was the height and mass of the new building, and the increased noise and traffic it would bring. These were matters of concern to residents of the small townhouses on Prospect Street, just north of the development. After several reviews by the Georgetown Board and the Commission, and with pressure from the community, the building was considerably reduced in size. As approved in 1988, there were three stories facing the townhouses and four on M Street, although the fourth floor was to be set back so that it would not be visible from sidewalk level. A residential element, facing Bank Street, was approved in 1990.

The Forrest-Marbury house at 3350 M Street is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a Category I landmark in the District of Columbia. It was built around 1790 by Uriah Forrest, and it was here in 1791 that George Washington met with Forrest and other Georgetown and Carrollsburgh landowners to discuss the boundaries of the capital city and work out the transfer of land to the federal government. In 1800 the house was sold to William Marbury who, several years later, was the plaintiff in the historic *Marbury vs. Madison* case. In spite of its historical importance, however, the house had been neglected since 1891, when the Marbury family moved, and it was converted to a store with apartments above. It went steadily downhill, and when purchased in 1984, its interior features had been obliterated and the exterior was

scarcely recognizable. To finance the purchase and restoration of the house, the owner requested approval, in 1985, for demolition of several 20th century commercial structures to the west, as well as an 1850s addition at the rear of the house, so that he could erect a commercial/residential building. Early schemes were considered much too large and not sensitive to the landmark structure, or to the small, late 19th century houses behind it. Subsequent reviews and revisions brought down the overall height and mass, retained the 1850s rear porch, and opened up more of the historic house to views from the south. Architects for the project were Geier, Brown & Renfrow.

A second renovation of an M Street landmark was approved in 1985. It involved repairs and restoration of the facades of 3000-3007 M Street, built between 1794 and 1810, and a small conservatory addition visible from 30th Street. The houses had undergone major restoration in the 1950s, soon after the passage of the Old Georgetown Act. Architects for the restoration were Bowie/Gridley. A more recent landmark, the old Car Barn near Key Bridge, was renovated and an addition made at roof level along M Street. Arthur Cotton Moore was the architect; the project was approved in 1985.

On the Georgetown waterfront, plans for the Rosewood Hotel and office building, the subject of much discussion in 1984, were dropped; a new project, for condominiums and offices, was reviewed by the Commission in May 1990 and approved in concept. Architects were Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The Commission had earlier been assured that the complicated transfer of land between the District and the National Park Service would go through, and that the developer had indeed made his promised contribution to the



Georgetown Park, Phase II, completed 1987; old Georgetown Market, 1865.

development of a waterfront park west of 31st Street. Plans for this park by EDAW, landscape architects, were approved in 1985. A master plan for the entire Georgetown waterfront park system was also approved. Included in the plan was a provision for a floating restaurant, to be located near Key Bridge. Preliminary plans for this facility, which would resemble a 19th century boat-house, were approved in 1988; the architect was J. Richards Andrews.

After numerous changes in design, the final plans for a small office building on the waterfront at 1001 34th Street were approved in 1987. The concept design for a mixed-use complex on the waterfront at 33rd Street was approved in April 1990 after several reviews by the Old Georgetown Board had brought about a considerable reduction in height and bulk. It will incorporate the existing PEPCO substation on the corner of K and 33rd Streets. Architects were Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann Associates.

The Shipstead-Luce Act

Private buildings erected in the monumental core of Washington under the Shipstead-Luce Act have been discussed under *The White House Area*, but there was also considerable activity in residential construction along the edges of Rock Creek Park, which is protected by this legislation. Of special interest were plans for two multi-dwelling developments.

The site for one was at Broad Branch Road and Davenport Street, N.W. In May 1989 the Commission looked at a model and drawings for the erection of five houses on a hilly site that already contained one traditional style stone house. The architect, Donald Little, of Cross & Little, said the existing house would be retained, and the new houses set into the steep site; by building them on piloti the contours and trees would be disturbed as little as possible, and by using natural materials, primarily wood and stone, the effect on the hillside would be minimized.

The members were pleased with the quality of the site planning, but were still concerned with the effect of so much construction on an unspoiled and particularly beautiful part of Rock Creek Park. Mr. Little reworked his design. The size of several of the houses was reduced, the siting altered to reduce the effect on the hillside, and conifers added to screen the most visible aspects of the development; further research into saving more trees on the site, and the use of sophisticated methods of controlling run-off reassured the members. After an inspection, however, it was still thought that the site could not accommodate five houses. Mr. Little returned with a scheme that eliminated the house considered most damaging to the park experience. The Commission thought the reduction in density greatly improved the design, and after hearing that the revisions were acceptable to the National Park Service, voted to approve the concept.

The second development took a different course. Like the first, the site at the intersection of Woodland, Rock Creek and Normanstone drives originally

contained only one house. The house was demolished and the land purchased by a developer who planned to put seven large houses on it, each with a swimming pool. They were designed in the Georgian tradition, and to adapt them to the rather hilly site, extensive grading had to be done and trees removed. Through an error, the District government issued a permit for the development without referring the application to the Commission of Fine Arts under the Shipstead-Luce Act. It was not until two houses were under construction that the Commission learned of the project from a concerned neighbor, late in 1988.

The Secretary notified the District government of the situation and requested a submission through the usual review process. A query to the Justice Department brought the opinion that the Commission would be justified in taking legal action if the District failed to act. The project was then submitted under the Shipstead-Luce Act in January 1989, with the developer testifying that the foundations were in for two more houses, and a large quantity of material had already been ordered for them. After a site inspection and review of the plans, the Commission told him it could not approve seven houses on the site; while they sympathized with his situation, the members said they could not set a precedent by allowing the District government to ignore the law, nor could they ignore their mandate to protect the park. The Chairman said he had never seen a worse desecration of the Shipstead-Luce area: the normal contours had been destroyed and the hillside entirely removed in the few weeks that had elapsed since the initial discussion.

When it became apparent that neither the developer nor the District government was complying with the Commission's action, the Justice Department obtained a restraining order to stop construction pending a resolution of the design and jurisdictional problems. A suit was instituted against the District government and the developer; after protracted legal proceedings and a lengthy hearing before the District's Board of Appeals and Review, a settlement was reached before the matter went to trial. The settlement included the completion of a third house on the corner of Woodland and Rock Creek drives, the elimination of one of the four remaining houses originally called for by the plans, and a major increase in use of landscape elements along the streets bordering Rock Creek Park. The Commission would also have complete authority to determine the character and siting of the last three houses to be built.

National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs Program

In 1988 the Commission of Fine Arts was given administrative responsibility for this program under the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Act. The program, established in 1986, provides grants to Washington, D.C., arts and other cultural organizations which are "not-for-profit, non-academic organizations of demonstrated national repute. . . having an annual operating budget in excess of \$1,000,000 for each of the three years prior to receipt of a grant." (Public Law 99-190)

In 1988 the \$4,500,000 program was divided among sixteen organizations, according to an established formula, after review of the applications by the chairmen of the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Commission of Fine Arts. The program was funded at \$5 million in 1989 and \$5,427,000 in 1990; in each year sixteen grants were made.

Publications

Volume two of the Commission's *Sixteenth Street Architecture* was published in 1988, joining the first volume in documenting the buildings of this historic avenue in the capital city. The ongoing series includes volumes one and two of *Massachusetts Avenue Architecture*, and nine other books, seven of them documenting the buildings of Georgetown.

New Commission Offices

After nearly twenty years in its nineteenth century townhouse on the west side of Lafayette Square, at 708 Jackson Place, N.W., the Commission moved its offices to the Pension Building, Suite 312, 441 F Street, N.W., in February 1990. Designed by General Montgomery Meigs in 1882 to house the Pension Office, the building's enormous scale and great, columned courtyard make for a far different working environment from that experienced in the small-scale townhouse. In addition to other government offices, the Pension Building houses the National Building Museum, and so provides a fitting home for the Commission of Fine Arts.



The Pension Building, Great Hall. Photograph by Jack E. Boucher/HABS.

Appendix

Legislation

Public Law No. 181—61st Congress—H.R. 19962
40 U.S.C. 104, 36 Stat. 371

SIXTY-FIRST CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA

AT THE SECOND SESSION

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the sixth day of December, one thousand nine hundred and nine.

AN ACT ESTABLISHING a Commission of Fine Arts.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That a permanent Commission of Fine Arts is hereby created to be composed of seven well-qualified judges of the fine arts, who shall be appointed by the President, and shall serve for a period of four years each, and until their successors are appointed and qualified. The President shall have authority to fill all vacancies. It shall be the duty of such commission to advise upon the location of statues, fountains, and monuments in the public squares, streets, and parks in the District of Columbia, and upon the selection of models for statues, fountains, and monuments erected under the authority of the United States and upon the selection of artists for the execution of the same. It shall be the duty of the officers charged by law to determine such questions in each case to call for such advice. The foregoing provisions of this Act shall not apply to the Capitol building of the United States and the building of the Library of Congress. The commission shall also advise generally upon questions of art when required to do so by the President, or by any committee of either House of Congress. Said commission shall have a secretary and such other assistance as the commission may authorize, and the members of the commission shall each be paid actual expenses in going to and returning from Washington to attend the meetings of said commission and while attending the same.

SEC. 2. That to meet the expenses made necessary by this Act an expenditure of not exceeding ten thousand dollars a year is hereby authorized.

J. G. CANNON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

J. S. SHERMAN,
*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*

Approved May 17, 1910.

Public Law No. 461—86th Congress—S. 2778
40 U.S.C.A. 106, 74 Stat. 128

AN ACT To amend the Act relating to the Commission of Fine Arts.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 2 of the Act entitled “An Act Establishing a Commission of Fine Arts,” as amended (40 U.S.C. 106), is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 2. There are hereby authorized to be appropriated such amounts as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.”

Approved May 13, 1960.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 1259

It is hereby ordered that the plans for no public building to be erected in the District of Columbia for the General Government shall be hereafter finally approved by the officer duly authorized, until after such officer shall have submitted the plans to the Commission of Fine Arts created under the Act of Congress of May 17, 1910, for its comment and advice.

WM. H. TAFT.

The WHITE HOUSE,
October 25, 1910.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 1862

It is hereby ordered that whenever new structures are to be erected in the District of Columbia under the direction of the federal government which affect in any important way the appearance of the City, or whenever questions involving matters of art and with which the federal government is concerned are to be determined, final action shall not be taken until such plans and questions have been submitted to the Commissioners of Fine Arts designated under the Act of Congress of May 17, 1910, for their comment and advice.

WOODROW WILSON

The WHITE HOUSE,
November 28, 1913.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 3524

It is hereby ordered that essential matters relating to the design of medals, insignia and coins, produced by the executive departments, also the designs of statues, fountains and monuments, and all important plans for parks and all public buildings, constructed by executive departments or the District of Columbia, which in any essential way

affect the appearance of the City of Washington, or the District of Columbia, shall be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for advice as to the merits of such designs before the executive officer having charge of the same shall approve thereof.

WARREN G. HARDING

The WHITE HOUSE,
July 28, 1921.

SHIPSTEAD-LUCE ACT
PUBLIC LAW 231—71ST CONGRESS—S. 2400
40 U.S.C. 121, 46 Stat. 366

AN ACT To regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings in certain areas of the National Capital.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in view of the provisions of the Constitution respecting the establishment of the seat of the National Government, the duties it imposed upon Congress in connection therewith, and the solicitude shown and the efforts exerted by President Washington in the planning and development of the Capital City, it is hereby declared that such development should proceed along the lines of good order, good taste, and with due regard to the public interests involved, and a reasonable degree of control should be exercised over the architecture of private or semipublic buildings adjacent to public buildings and grounds of major importance. To this end, hereafter when application is made for permit for the erection or alteration of any building, any portion of which is to front or abut upon the grounds of the Capitol, the grounds of the White House, the portion of Pennsylvania Avenue extending from the Capitol to the White House, Rock Creek Park, the Zoological Park, the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Potomac Park, The Mall Park System and public buildings adjacent thereto, or abutting upon any street bordering any of said grounds or parks, the plans therefor, so far as they relate to height and appearance, color, and texture of the materials of exterior construction, shall be submitted by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to the Commission of Fine Arts; and the said commission shall report promptly to said commissioners its recommendations, including such changes, if any, as in its judgment are necessary to prevent reasonably avoidable impairment of the public values belonging to such public building or park; and said commissioners shall take such action as shall, in their judgment, effect reasonable compliance with such recommendation: *Provided*, That if the said Commission of Fine Arts fails to report its approval or disapproval of such plans, within thirty days, its approval thereof shall be assumed and a permit may be issued.

SEC. 2. Said Commissioners of the District of Columbia, in consultation with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, as early as practicable after approval of this Act, shall prepare plats defining the areas within which application for building permits shall be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for its recommendations.

Approved May 16, 1930.

PUBLIC LAW 248—76TH CONGRESS—H.R. 5660

40 U.S.C. 121, 53 Stat. 1144

AN ACT To include Lafayette Park within the provisions of the Act entitled "An Act to regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings in certain areas of the National Capital," approved May 16, 1930.

The Act, approved July 31, 1939, amended the Shipstead-Luce Act to include private or semipublic buildings fronting or abutting upon Lafayette Park within its provisions.

OLD GEORGETOWN ACT

PUBLIC LAW 808—81ST CONGRESS—H.R. 7670

D.C. Code 5-801, 64 Stat. 903

AN ACT To regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings in the Georgetown area of the National Capital.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there is hereby created in the District of Columbia a district known as "Old Georgetown" which is bounded on the east by Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway from the Potomac River to the north boundary of Dumbarton Oaks Park, on the north by the north boundary of Dumbarton Oaks Park, Whitehaven Street and Whitehaven Parkway to Thirty-fifth Street, south along the middle of Thirty-fifth Street to Reservoir Road, west along the middle of Reservoir Road to Archbold Parkway, on the west by Archbold Parkway from Reservoir Road to the Potomac River, on the south by the Potomac River to the Rock Creek Parkway.

SEC. 2. In order to promote the general welfare and to preserve and protect the places and areas of historic interest, exterior architectural features and examples of the type of architecture used in the National Capital in its initial years, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, before issuing any permit for the construction, alteration, reconstruction, or razing of any building within said Georgetown district described in section I shall refer the plans to the National Commission

of Fine Arts for a report as to the exterior architectural features, height, appearance, color, and texture of the materials of exterior construction which is subject to public view from a public highway. The National Commission of Fine Arts shall report promptly to said Commissioners of the District of Columbia its recommendations, including such changes, if any, as in the judgment of the Commission are necessary and desirable to preserve the historic value of said Georgetown district. The said Commissioners shall take such actions as in their judgment are right and proper in the circumstances: *Provided*, That, if the said Commission of Fine Arts fails to submit a report on such plans within forty-five days, its approval thereof shall be assumed and a permit may be issued.

SEC. 3. In carrying out the purpose of this Act, the Commission of Fine Arts is hereby authorized to appoint a committee of three architects, who shall serve as a board of review without expense to the United States and who shall advise the Commission of Fine Arts, in writing, regarding designs and plans referred to it.

SEC. 4. Said Commissioners of the District of Columbia, with the aid of the National Park Service and of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, shall make a survey of the "Old Georgetown" area for the use of the Commission of Fine Arts and of the building permit office of the District of Columbia, such survey to be made at a cost not exceeding \$8,000, which amount is hereby authorized.

SEC. 5. Nothing contained in this Act shall be construed as superseding or affecting in any manner any Act of Congress heretofore enacted relating to the alteration, repair, or demolition of insanitary or unsafe dwellings or other structures.

Approved September 22, 1950.

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS ACT

36 U.S.C. 121

AN ACT for the creation of an American Battle Monuments Commission to erect suitable memorials commemorating the services of the American soldier in Europe, and for other purposes.

* * *

SEC. 124. Approval of designs for memorials. Before any design for any memorial is accepted by the Commission, it shall be approved by the National Commission of Fine Arts.

Approved March 4, 1923. Amended in 1946 to extend the Commission's authority to cover all battlefields and cemeteries throughout the world; amended in 1956 to eliminate provision under "Approval of designs for memorials" that required prior approval of materials for memorials.

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING ACT OF 1952

Public Law 592—82d Congress—H.R. 7502

40 U.S.C. 72, 66 Stat. 781

AN ACT TO amend the Act of June 6, 1924, as amended, relating to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and for other purposes.

Under the provisions of the Act, approved July 19, 1952, the National Capital Planning Commission seeks the advice of the Commission of Fine Arts in the selection of lands suitable for the development of the National Capital park, parkway, and playground system in the District of Columbia, and the States of Maryland and Virginia.

Public Law 263—85th Congress—H.R. 896

10 U.S.C. 4594, 71 Stat. 589

AN ACT TO amend title 10, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to furnish heraldic services.

Under the provisions of the Act, approved September 2, 1957, the Commission upon request advises the Heraldic Branch, Quartermaster Corps, Department of the Army, upon merits of proposed designs for medals, insignia, seals, etc., prepared under the authority of the Act of August 26, 1957 (10 U.S.C., 1958 ed., section 4594), which authorizes the Secretary of the Army to furnish heraldic services to the other departments and agencies of the Government.

COMMEMORATIVE WORKS ACT

Public Law 99-652—H.R. 4378

40 U.S.C. 1001

AN ACT TO provide standards for placement of commemorative works on certain Federal lands in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes.

Requires site and design approval of all commemorative works by the Commission of Fine Arts, National Capital Planning Commission, and (as appropriate) the Secretary of the Interior or the Administrator of General Services.

Approved November 14, 1986.

NATIONAL CAPITAL ARTS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Public Law 99-190—20 U.S.C. 956a

“There is hereby authorized a program to support artistic and cultural programs in the Nation’s Capital. . . . Eligibility for grants shall be limited to not-for-profit, non-academic institutions of demonstrated national repute and is further limited to organizations having an annual operating budget in excess of \$1,000,000 for each of the three years prior to receipt of a grant.”

* * *

Approved December 19, 1985. Public Law 100-102, approved December 22, 1987, transferred administrative responsibility from the National Endowment for the Humanities to the Commission of Fine Arts.

Members of the Commission

CHAIRMEN

Daniel H. Burnham, 1910-1912
Daniel Chester French, 1912-1915
Charles Moore, 1915-1937
Gilmore D. Clarke, 1937-1950
David E. Finley, 1950-1963
William Walton, 1963-1971
J. Carter Brown, 1971-

ARCHITECTS

Daniel H. Burnham, 1910-1912
Thomas Hastings, 1910-1917
Cass Gilbert, 1910-1916
Pierce Anderson, 1912-1916
Charles A. Platt, 1916-1921
William Mitchell Kendall, 1916-1921
John Russell Pope, 1917-1922
Louis Ayres, 1921-1925
Henry Bacon, 1921-1924
Milton B. Medary, Jr., 1922-1927
William Adams Delano, 1924-1928
Abram Garfield, 1925-1930
Benjamin W. Morris, 1927-1931
John W. Cross, 1928-1933
John L. Mauran, 1930-1933
Egerton Swartwout, 1931-1936
John Mead Howells, 1933-1937
Charles A. Coolidge, 1933-1936
Charles L. Borie, Jr., 1936-1940
Henry R. Shepley, 1936-1940
William F. Lamb, 1937-1945
Paul P. Cret, 1940-1945
John A. Holabird, 1940-1945
William T. Aldrich, 1945-1950
L. Andrew Reinhard, 1945-1950
Frederick V. Murphy, 1945-1950
Joseph Hudnut, 1950-1955
Edward F. Neild, Sr., 1950-1955
Pietro Belluschi, 1950-1955
Wallace K. Harrison, 1955-1959
Douglas W. Orr, 1955-1963
William G. Perry, 1955-1963
Ralph Walker, 1959-1963
Gordon Bunshaft, 1963-1972
Burnham Kelly, 1963-1967
John Carl Warnecke, 1963-1967
Chloethiel W. Smith, 1967-1976
Kevin Roche, 1969-1980
Nicolas Arroyo, 1971-1976
Victorine du Pont Homsey, 1976-1980
Frederick Doveton Nichols, 1976-1981
John S. Chase, 1980-1985
Walter A. Netsch, 1980-1985
Adele Chatfield-Taylor, 1989-
George E. Hartman, 1989-

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., 1910-1918
James L. Greenleaf, 1918-1927
Ferruccio Vitale, 1927-1932
Gilmore D. Clarke, 1932-1950
Elbert Peets, 1950-1958

Michael Rapuano, 1958-1962
Hideo Sasaki, 1962-1971
Edward D. Stone, Jr., 1971-1985
Neil H. Porterfield, 1985-

SCULPTORS

Daniel Chester French, 1910-1915
Herbert Adams, 1915-1920
James E. Fraser, 1920-1925
Lorado Taft, 1925-1929
Adolph Weinman, 1929-1933
Lee Lawrie, 1933-1937, 1945-1950
Paulanship, 1937-1941
Ralph Stackpole, 1941-1945
Felix W. de Weldon, 1950-1963
Theodore Roszak, 1963-1969
Frederick E. Hart, 1985-1989
Pascal Regan, 1985-1989

PAINTERS

Francis D. Millet, 1910-1912
Edwin H. Blashfield, 1912-1916
J. Alden Weir, 1916-1919
William Sergeant Kendall, 1920-1921
H. Siddons Mowbray, 1921-1928
Ezra Winter, 1928-1933
Eugene F. Savage, 1933-1941
Henry V. Poor, 1941-1945
Maurice Sterne, 1945-1950
George Biddle, 1950-1955
Emily Muir, 1955-1959
Peter Hurd, 1959-1963
William Walton, 1963-1971
George A. Weymouth, 1972-1977

LAYMEN

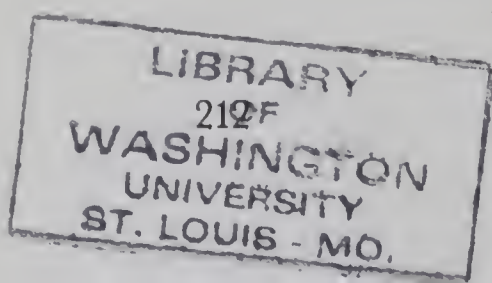
Charles Moore, 1910-1940
Edward Bruce, 1940-1943
David E. Finley, 1943-1963
Aline B. Saarinen, 1963-1971
John Walker, 1967-1971
Jane Dart, 1971-1976
J. Carter Brown, 1971-
Eli S. Jacobs, 1976-1980
Philip W. Buchen, 1977-1981
Harold Burson, 1981-1985
Sondra G. Myers, 1980-1985
Alan R. Novak, 1981-1985
Carolyn J. Deaver, 1985-1990
Roy M. Goodman, 1985-1989
Diane Wolf, 1985-1990
Joan Abrahamson, 1990-
Robert A. Peck, 1990-

SECRETARIES

Colonel Spencer Cosby, 1910-1913
Colonel William W. Harts, 1913-1917
Colonel C. S. Ridley, 1917-1921
Lt. Colonel C. O. Sherrill, 1921-1922
H. P. Caemmerer, 1922-1954
Linton R. Wilson, 1954-1964
Charles H. Atherton, 1965-

Publications

- Report to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts on the Environmental Design of Streets in Washington, D.C.* (1964). A study by the Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- The Appearance of Parking* (1966). A study by Collins and Dutot, landscape architects, prepared for the Commission of Fine Arts.
- Georgetown Commercial Architecture: M Street* (1967).
- Georgetown Commercial Architecture: Wisconsin Avenue* (1967).
- Georgetown Architecture: The Waterfront* (1968).
- Georgetown Historic Waterfront* (1968, 1974). In cooperation with the National Park Service.
- Georgetown Residential Architecture: Northeast* (1969).
- Georgetown Residential Architecture: Northwest* (1970).
- Georgetown Architecture* (1970).
- Washington Architecture, 1791-1861; Problems in Development* (1971).
- Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, Volume I* (1973).
- Bridges and the City of Washington* (1974).
- Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, Volume II* (1975).
- The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History* (1977).
- Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume I* (1978).
- Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume II* (1988).





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